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Volume 19, No. 10
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Defense





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Aug. 20	UNO	7 p.m.
Aug. 27	TEXAS TECH	7 p.m.
Aug. 29	BAYLOR	1 p.m.
Sept. 3	ORAL ROBERTS	7 p.m.
Sept. 10/12	Husker Fila Invitational	
Sept. 10	USC vs. Portland	5 p.m.
	CONNECTICUT	7 p.m.
Sept. 12	USC vs. Connecticut	11 a.m.
	PORTLAND	1 p.m.
Sept. 24	TULSA	7 p.m.
Oct. 8	DENVER	7 p.m.
Oct. 15	KANSAS	7 p.m.
Oct. 17	MISSOURI	1 p.m.
Oct. 29	IOWA STATE	7 p.m.

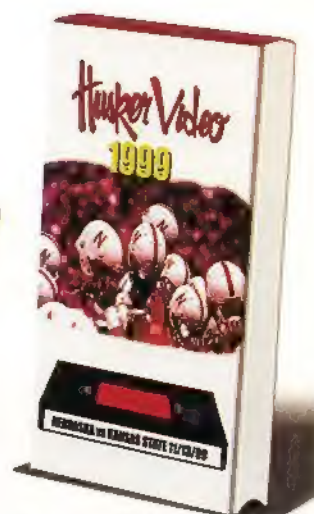
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CUT & SEND

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20 Tight End By Committee

Recent recruiting success has left Nebraska well-stocked at tight end. *By Mike Babcock*

ON THE COVER

Julius Jackson celebrates after one of his two touchdowns vs. Southern Mississippi. *Photo by Scott Bruhn*

Questions Remain After Narrow Victory

Huskers 3-0 entering Big 12 opener, but No. 3 wasn't pretty



Brian Hill

IS NEBRASKA overrated? Did it look past Southern Mississippi? Did all the changes on offense lead to the lack of consistency and execution?

All of those questions and many more are on the minds of

Cornhusker fans entering Saturday's Big 12 Conference opener at Missouri.

Just how good is this team, which has rushed for 233 yards total in the past two games?

"I'm concerned that for two weeks in a row, we have not been able to run the ball," Nebraska Coach Frank Solich said after the final nonconference game.

The Huskers finished with 119 rushing yards, did not have a first down in the first quarter and did not have a player rush for 100 yards for the third straight game.

Turnovers were also a problem against Southern Mississippi. The Huskers had five, and fumbles by Bobby Newcombe and Dan Alexander set up the two Golden Eagle scores.

Newcombe also just missed a touch-down pass from Crouch, and Randy Stella's 94-yard kickoff return was nullified by a penalty.

The salvation was another outstanding performance by Nebraska's big-play defense, which scored two of the three touchdowns, intercepted four passes and had five sacks.

Senior linebacker Julius Jackson and sophomore cornerback Keyuo Craver were the ringleaders. Jackson returned a fumble and an interception for touchdowns, and Craver had two interceptions in the final six minutes to preserve the 20-13 victory.

Steady rover Mike Brown contributed 12 tackles, and rush end Kyle Vanden Bosch had nine tackles and

two sacks.

"We have a mission, and we know that we can't win a national championship without a good defense," defensive coordinator Charlie McBride said. "I can't say enough about these players because it's not the coaches, it's the players on the field that get it done."

And the Huskers are 3-0. But they realize they will have to improve.

"There is no question that we need to execute a lot better than we did today," Solich said. Why the execution is at the level that it's at right now, I'm not quite sure . . . so I don't know.

"I don't believe that moving personnel around affected us all that much."

Speaking of execution, we are also trying to do better.

Some of you have had problems with your subscription or delivery. We are taking steps to correct this.

For those of you who have asked, the magazines are mailed out each Monday, as they have been in the past. Labor Day week was an exception.

We understand your disappointment when you

do not receive the magazine before the next game. We are working with our printer and the postal service to see what else can be done.

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To Play or Redshirt?

Playing even a down could cost a season of eligibility

Rob Blomeier was among three true freshman defensive backs who made the trip to Iowa, but he didn't play, even though the participation chart included with the statistics indicated he did.

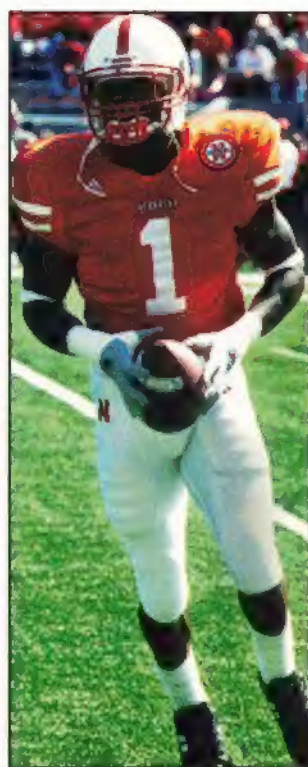
When the team returned to Lincoln, the sports information office checked with George Darlington, Blomeier's position coach. "They try to be pretty exact," Darlington said.

That's important, particularly in the case of Blomeier and four other true freshmen who traveled to Iowa but didn't play because if they had played, even a down, they would have lost a season of eligibility. It's almost certain that Blomeier will be redshirted, as will Pat Ricketts, a walkon from Omaha Millard North and another of the true freshman defensive backs who got to go to Iowa City.

Taylor Gehman, the third true freshman defensive back, played.

The confusion regarding Blomeier is understandable. He wore a No. 12 jersey, the same as Bobby Newcombe, and Newcombe, of course, started at quarterback and played a lot.

That wasn't the only mixup in the official statistics because of duplicate numbers. Cornerback Ralph Brown was credited with three carries for 12 yards because he and fullback Ben Kingston both wore a No.



Freshmen defensive backs Rob Blomeier (15), Pat Ricketts (6) and Taylor Gehman (1) have all suited up this fall, but only Gehman has seen action. The other two will probably redshirt.

22 jersey, and split end Wilson Thomas was credited with four tackles because he and linebacker Mark Vedral both wore a No. 9 jersey. Thomas did have one tackle. But the others were Vedral's.

"You have to be careful, with all the bodies we take," said Darlington. "Usually the first out-of-conference game we can take more players. And, of course, we won't know probably for two or three weeks what we're going to do concerning (redshirting) some players, not only at defensive back but at other positions. It really is due to injuries and also how well certain players perform."

Players are allowed to suit up for games, home or away, without sacrificing a redshirt season, providing they don't get in the games. "But we do reach a point

where if we've gone far enough in the year, we don't ever want to sacrifice a redshirt year on a freshman," Darlington said.

When that point is reached, redshirt players typically don't suit up for home games.

Only in an extreme emergency would a player be pulled from a redshirt once the conference season has begun. "In fact, I can think of a couple of situations in the past where we probably could have won a Big Eight championship (by taking a freshman out of a redshirt)," said Darlington.

One such situation involved Rod Horn, a defensive tackle who played on the freshman team in 1975 and then redshirted in 1976. "You can't say for sure, but Rod was arguably a better player at the end of his redshirt year

than the player he would have replaced," Darlington said.

"And we lost to Oklahoma by three points."

With Horn in the rotation at defensive tackle, the Cornhuskers might have defeated Oklahoma instead of losing 20-17, according to Darlington. "There's no way to say yes or no, but I believe that," he said. "But it wouldn't have been fair because Rod would have played in only three games."

The first few weeks can be overwhelming, but "a lot of times, freshmen will improve a lot," said Darlington. "So you might say: 'Well, they're about even, and then all of a sudden, after a week or so, you say: 'Hey, this freshman is better than the senior, or he's better than the junior. That's not unusual.'"



Frankie London

MORE DOWNS THAN UPS?

During the Tuesday news conference at which Frank Solich discussed Eric Crouch's becoming the No. 1 quarterback, Bobby Newcombe's moving to wingback and DeAngelo Evans' quitting the team, the rumor that senior wingback Frankie London had quit the team also was addressed.

"Frankie has never indicated that to me," Solich said.

End of discussion.

The next day's edition of the Omaha World-Herald quoted London: "After all the things that I've come back from, there's nobody who can tell me that Frankie London can't make it."

Consider his personal trials and tribulations at Nebraska.

Up — Early in the 1997 season, fans were calling for him to be the quarterback.

Down — After competing with Crouch and Newcombe for the starting quarterback's job during spring practice in 1998, he decided to move to wingback for his junior season.

Down — He suffered a broken leg on a punt return against Kansas and missed the rest of the season.

Down — The amount of playing time he was likely to see this season diminished significantly when Shevin Wiggins was granted another season of eligibility by the NCAA.

Up — He moved back up on the depth chart after Wiggins was suspended from the team.

Down — Now he has moved back down on the depth chart with Newcombe's move to wingback. ■

QUICK HITS

What's Happening In Nebraska Athletics?

RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME

Freshman Pat Ricketts was checking out his dorm room in Harper Hall when he got a telephone call from his mom in Omaha. She had just talked to Nebraska secondary coach George Darlington.

"Coach Darlington would like you to report later this afternoon," she said.

Ricketts, a walkon from Millard North High School hadn't expected to report for practice until classes began. But because Erwin Swiney was injured and couldn't begin practice, Darlington wanted him to report early, among the 105 allowed by the NCAA. "I was just kind of shocked," he said.

He was shocked again when he found a jersey with his name on the back in his locker on Photo Day in late August. Only seven other true freshmen had their names on the backs of their jerseys, and he was the only walkon. "I thought that was real neat, an honor," Ricketts said. "You come in the locker room and the name's on the back of your jersey. That's pretty exciting."

Ricketts, who had scholarship offers from Army and New Mexico State, also was included on the travel roster for the Iowa game. But it appears now that he will be redshirted.

Reporting early didn't allow him time to return home to get his belongings before classes started. "My family brought my stuff down," he said. "I just had a set of clothes and tennis shoes."

QUOTES WORTH NOTING

— Freshman I-back Josh Davis on the linemen in his scholarship recruiting class: "The ones in high school weren't as big as these guys. These guys are monsters."

— Kickers coach Dan Young on the value of a reliable deep-snapper: "In 1997, Kyle Henson, that's all he did was snap. Right before the Missouri game, we decided to go with Kyle. We had to sacrifice a guy to travel and all he was going to do was snap. So there was some question whether to do it. But when we were one point down and no time on the clock, it's nice to have Kyle Henson in there snapping the ball."

— Coach Frank Solich on NCAA rules: "There are some things in terms of a uniform that don't seem very important to us, but they're important to the players, and tough on them to get used to."

"No longer can you have the jersey out. No longer can you have a jersey that ends at the belt line. It's got to be a jersey that's tucked into your pants. Those kind of things are a little tough."

"You can't wear a bandana. You can't wear a headband. You can wear what they call a skull cap, but you can't have a hole in the top of the skull cap or they consider it a headband."

"There are a lot of things like that, that I'm sure there's a purpose for. But on the surface, they are things you've got to be careful that you're (complying) because in a game, they could cost you."



Keyuo Craver

but faster than grass." ■

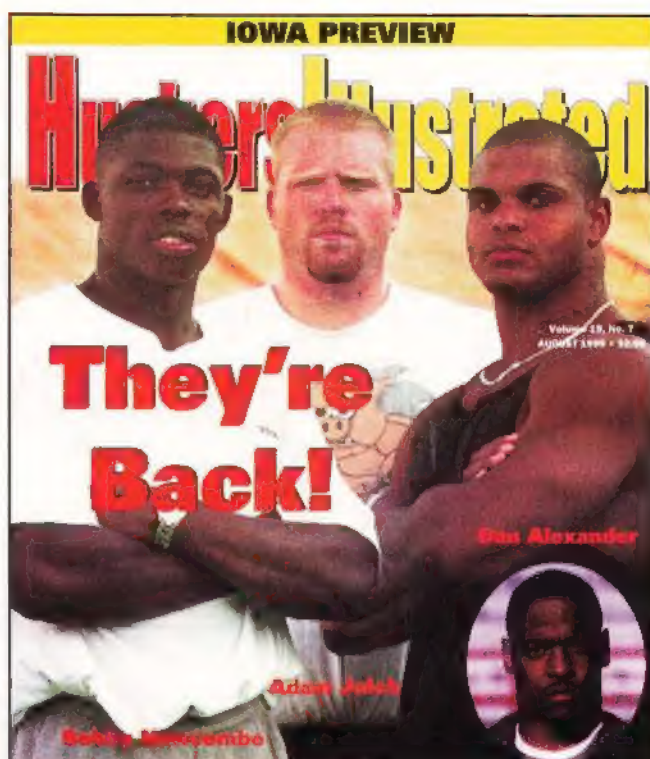
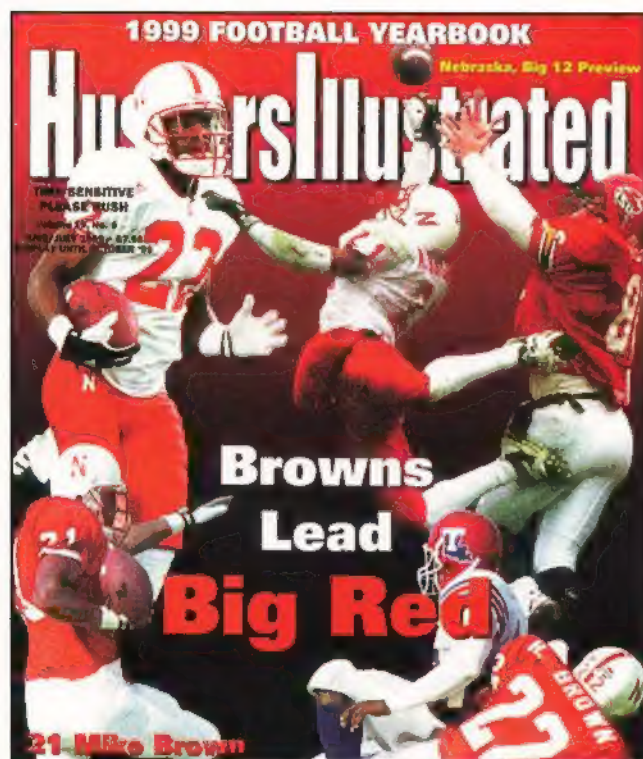
— Solich on sophomore Keyuo Craver, a cornerback who also can return punts and kickoffs: "Keyuo has worked just about everywhere you can work on a football field."

— Solich on junior I-back Dan Alexander: "He comes off injuries faster than any human being I've ever seen. So you kind of get to where you expect that of him."

— Senior rover Mike Brown on Craver: "We have a lot of confidence in Keyuo. We think he's going to be a great defensive back for Nebraska for a couple of more years. He's the type of player that can be an All-American, a Jim Thorpe candidate and win a lot of awards. He's a great athlete, probably one of the best athletes on our team. He could play any position on the field."

— Junior Bobby Newcombe, now a wingback, on FieldTurf: "One thing I like about it, there's a lot less stress on your body, especially when you get knocked down on it, a lot less stress on your knees, a lot less impact. Compared to the turf, a little bit, we had last year, it felt like you could end practice with a lot less soreness as well. Is it fast? It's probably a tad slower than turf,

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. . . ALL THE TIME

Evans' Early Exit Leaves Questions

Junior I-back changes tune after only two games



**Mike
BABCOCK**

"Like Prince said, I'm going to party like it's 1999."

DeAngelo Evans, Aug. 11, 1999

DEANGELO EVANS STAYED to answer a few additional questions after his interview at Nebraska's weekly news conference on the Tuesday before the California game. He seemed in good spirits.

"People probably think I'm in a bad mood all the time," he said.

"But I just don't really get too excited about anything or too down about anything. I just try to keep an even keel, no matter how good or bad things get. It's a mature approach, I think."

A month earlier, at Nebraska's preseason media day, Evans said much the same thing.

"I really worked hard to get back from the injuries," he said. "I've been real impressed with how I've handled myself. It's been a tough time for me and my family; a lot of people close to me can tell you. But I want to be there for this team for 13 games. That's my goal, to be there for the long haul."

The long haul proved to be only two games. And it was no party for the former Cornhusker I-back. He carried 13 times for 69 yards against Iowa and six times for 5 yards against California.

Then he left the team, apparently for good. His mind "seemed to be pretty well made up," Coach Frank Solich said at the Tuesday news conference before the Southern Mississippi game.

By the time you read this, Evans may have returned. Anything is possible. And nothing should be surprising by now. Correll Buckhalter missed three days of practices and meetings before being welcomed back to the team. But the situation with Evans seemed different.

"I never want to close the door on any player in terms of communication. So that door is open. And I hope that somehow we do get together," said Solich. "But from our conversation this weekend, I don't see it being a case where he will come back to this football team."

If Evans doesn't, it will mark the unfortunate end to what three seasons ago looked to be a career that could have earned him a place among the best I-backs in Cornhusker history.

He was a special player, with impeccable credentials. He broke Barry Sanders' high school rushing records in Wichita, Kan., and he was pursued by all the top programs.

Among those he turned down to accept Nebraska's scholarship offer were Notre Dame and Penn State. Apparently, he had no doubts about his decision to become a Cornhusker. He was the first member of his recruiting class to make an oral commitment, announcing his intentions in October.

He played in 11 games as a true freshman, rushing for 776 yards and 14 touchdowns, three of which he scored in the Big 12 championship game against Texas. Even though Nebraska lost, his performance was noteworthy. He carried 32 times for 130 yards and caught six passes for 42 yards.

And he did those things despite the pain of an abdominal injury that would force him to the sideline as a medical red-shirt his second season. He would never again be healthy for long.

He played in only three games last season because of a knee injury, a toe injury and a bruised tailbone, and the effects of those injuries carried over to spring practice, most of which he missed.

Even so, he began fall camp as the No. 1 I-back, and he remained there. He would have been first on the pre-Southern Mississippi depth chart, according to Solich. If he hadn't quit.

Evans may have made a public statement by now. His mom told the Omaha World-Herald that he wanted to wait until things settled down before talking to the news media.

His mom was angry, the World-Herald reported. But then, that's how moms can be.

"I think, in general, it came down to the role he was playing," Solich said, doing his best to explain what only Evans himself could. "It took a tremendous amount of work and effort to come off the injuries he came off of. I've got a great deal of respect for DeAngelo and how he hung in there, how he

worked through all of those injuries to put himself into position to play again."

Then to get only six carries against California had to be frustrating.

However, "I'm sure there are some other factors involved," said Solich.

On the Tuesday before the California game, Evans said he had been bothered by sore hamstrings since two-a-day practices began. "Some days they're real, real sore. So that affects me."

More specifically, the hamstring problem affected his "big-play capability" in the Iowa game, he said. "If they hadn't bothered me, I think I would have made big plays. I'm still able to be on the field and be effective, but in some ways not as effective as I feel like I can be, making big plays."

Perhaps Evans felt if he couldn't be as effective as he would like, it was time to end his career. It might have been part pride and part frustration. But that's probably too simple of an explanation for something as complex as the mind of a talented, highly competitive 22-year-old athlete.

"People always ask me what's wrong," he said. "Nothing."

It was certainly more than nothing that led to his surprise departure. ■



DeAngelo Evans rushed for 74 yards in two games.

Backup Cornerback An Unlikely Husker

*Grand Island native Hemje used his initiative
to keep the dream alive*



**Bob
SCHALLER**

friends."

Going through Grand Island High School, Hemje kept the dream alive.

He was hoping to play college football. But there was one problem: No one recruited him. He tried to recruit himself to Iowa State, where he had academic scholarships for electrical engineering in place.

"Eventually," his father said, "Iowa State said they would let him walk on."

But Hemje had one option outstanding at that point, an academic scholarship to the University of Nebraska. When that came through, Hemje thought about walking on for the Huskers. However, since the walk-on program is so established and crowded, players actually have to be invited to walk-on.

Before Hemje drove the 89 miles to Lincoln to complete the paperwork he needed for the academic scholarship in the summer of 1997, he called Al Papik, the NCAA compliance official for the Huskers, to set up a meeting. Papik graciously met with Hemje and while offering encouragement, he had to inform Hemje that all of the Husker walk-on slots were filled.

"I really thought at that point," Hemje said, "that I had to give up football."

His father knew Jeff was going to Lincoln, but knew nothing about the meeting with Papik.

"That was really a lot of initiative on Jeff's part," Robert Hemje said. "If he'd have told me what he was doing, I probably would have thought he was half crazy — he just didn't really have a chance, or so I thought. I don't know where he got the guts to walk into Al Papik's office that day. At first he asked Mr. Papik if he could just work out in the weight room with the team and then try out in the spring, but they couldn't do that."

A funny thing happened three days later. Husker secondary coach George Darlington had an opening for a walk-on.

"They found they had one spot, and I could try it," Hemje said. "At that point, I was just glad to be a part of the team."

His walk-on bid received a boost from Ken Fischer, who helps the Husker coaching staff with film — the same Ken Fischer who coached Robert Hemje at Midland College. But it was all Jeff Hemje from that point on. He redshirted and

got outstanding grades as an electrical engineering major — he has a 3.9 grade point average. And he build up his strength and speed, although his father, when asked if Jeff is fast, had this answer:

"You mean fast academically or athletically?" Robert Hemje quipped.

Jeff is quick — his 10-yard dash was second fastest in 1999 testing, behind only quarterback Eric Crouch. He also scores consistently well in the pro agility drills. Hemje lettered in 1998 as a redshirt freshman and played in four games.

His first college tackle came against Iowa State. He is now second on the depth-chart at cornerback and has seen action in each game this season.

"He's the kind of kid you want on your team, just because of who he is as a person," Darlington said. "He made his own place for himself here. He's kept working and working. He's so smart that he figured things out, and he saw some playing time last year as a redshirt freshman. And he helps the team in another way too: Since he is on (academic) scholarship, he doesn't count against the NCAA allotment."

Hemje also fit in right away. A devout Christian, Hemje's confidence is unspoken behind a sheath of humility.

"Jeff's a real quiet kid who worked hard to learn how to do the job," said Husker all-American cornerback Ralph Brown. "I love the heart and desire he showed to get where he is. He's the one who made his own chance. Since then, he's made the most of it. He's the kind of guy who you really like to see succeed because he deserves it so much."

Hemje spent his summers installing sprinkler systems to earn money. Now, he spends what little free time he has speaking to kids about making the right choice and keeping dreams alive. He's gone with receivers coach Ron Brown around the state to impart inspiration to kids who maybe need that extra boost to realize dreams can come true through hard work and making the right choices.

Hemje was named to the Brook Berringer Citizenship Team for his efforts — and he wears the number of the late quarterback, No. 18.

"It was a one-in-a-million shot — that's all I had," Hemje said. "No one thought I had a chance, and I'll be honest with you: I didn't think I had anything more than a chance either. Now it's like I'm living a dream, going from rooting for this team growing up to playing for them."

He's says "them" but probably means "us." since he is now part of the team.

But hey, it's his dream. ■



**Jeff Hemje is
a backup corner-
back.**

Bob Schaller covers the Huskers for the Scottsbluff Star-Herald. He has also written several books, including "Touchdown Tommie" and "Roar of Silence: The Kenny Walker Story."

'This Is A Defense With A Lot Of Character'

Junior middle linebacker Polk leads Blackshirts' early dominance



Curt McKEEVER

ONE PLAY early in Nebraska's 45-0 win against California pretty much showed me all I needed to know about the Cornhuskers' defense.

The Bears, facing third-and-21 at the NU 25-yard line, set up a picture-perfect swing pass to running back Joe Igber, complete with a wall of blockers. Igber looked certain to pick up the first down, if not score.

From out of nowhere came Nebraska middle linebacker Carlos Polk, fighting his

way through one blocker to make a diving, shoestring tackle to bring Igber to the turf after an 8-yard pickup.

Cal missed a field goal on the next play and the Blackshirts would go about their suffocating ways to post their first shutout.

Technically, it should have counted as shutout No. 2 because Iowa's lone score in the season opener came on a blocked punt.

But Polk thinks any score against a team Nebraska is supposed to overpower looks bad.

That's why blanking the Bears "was very important to us," he said after the Sept. 11 victory. "After we saw our shutout go down the drain (against Iowa), we were sick.

"When we came out (against Cal), all we were thinking was shutout," Polk said.

Defensive coordinator Charlie McBride must secretly love all the media attention that's being focused on the Nebraska quarterbacks and I-backs. In the meantime, it looks like he has assembled a group that could be one of the most dominant in school history.

Even McBride, who's not one to load up on praise, was half-beaming after the Cal win.

"You sure can't say it's all bad," he said.

All bad?

Cal rushed for 40 yards on 35 attempts and totaled just 145 total yards, averaging 2.4 per play. The Bears' quarterbacks were sacked five times, and Cal turned the ball over three times.

"This is a defense with a lot of character," McBride said. "It's a defense that's close. They're all dependable players — probably as dependable a group as I've had, as far as always trying as hard as they can."

Nebraska's defensive starters — six seniors, four juniors and one sophomore — beat up on a Cal offense that had an inexperienced offensive line and quarterbacks.

"(But) I don't want to take anything away from the per-

formance of the defense," said NU coach Frank Solich. "They've done all we've asked and all that is possible for them to do. They will get tested down the road much more than they have these first two games.

"(But) they're a mature group. They know there will be times when it's not so easy, and they're looking forward to those times. They enjoy challenges."

Polk, a 6-foot-2, 250-pound junior, has helped lead the way

"He's playing with so much confidence right now, and he's getting better every week," McBride said. "He weighs 250, and I don't think people realize that."

Said Nebraska senior cornerback Ralph Brown, "I tell everybody Carlos will be the best linebacker in the nation next year."

Polk could be a big wildcard for the Blackshirts. If you look at NU's best defenses of the 90s, they've all had a big playmaker at linebacker.

Terrell Farley, Jamel Williams, Ed Stewart and Troy Dumas all wreaked havoc on the best of offenses.

"There are guys who play sideline-to-sideline and maybe the play seems out of reach," linebackers coach Craig Bohl said. "Carlos gets there."

"He's playing a little bit better than we anticipated. He is going to become a better player. He

could become one of the best."

Bohl will get no argument from Cal Coach Tom Holmoe.

"Polk is one of the best middle linebackers that I have seen in a while," he said. "His ability to get sideline to sideline is amazing.

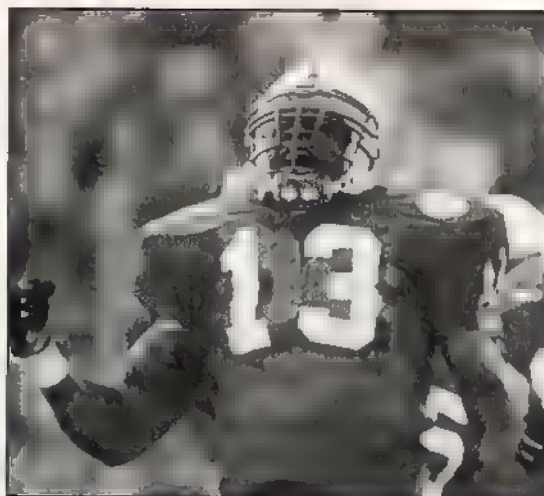
Polk smiled when told of that comment.

"You hear something nice from your coaches, and that's great," he said. "You hear it from the opposing coach, and that really sticks with you."

By now, what also should be sticking with coaches who are preparing for the Cornhuskers is that it's going to take a lot of skill and creativity to be able to mount much offense.

After two games, the Blackshirts were a deserved fifth nationally in average yards allowed (157 per game) and fourth in scoring defense (33.5 points).

"It's only the second game of the season, but we're looking better," said defensive tackle Jason Lohr ■



Carlos Polk was Nebraska's leader in tackles (14) and sacks (two) through the first two games.

Curt McKeever is a sportswriter, covering the University of Nebraska for the Lincoln Journal Star. In addition to reporting on football he is the primary beat writer for the men's basketball and baseball teams.

Tiger Offense Still Rolling

Missouri overcomes losses of Jones, West to start 1999 season with 2-0 mark

It doesn't seem possible that it's been almost two years since Nebraska's "Miracle in Missouri."

It was Nov. 8, 1997, and Nebraska faced a third-and-10 on the Tigers' 12-yard line. Scott Frost zipped a pass into the end zone intended for wingback Shevin Wiggins. The ball bounced off Wiggins' hands and then his foot before a diving Matt Davison grabbed it just before it hit the grass.

The touchdown sent the game into overtime, and Nebraska went on to win

MISSOURI

Record 2-0

S 4	UAB	W, 31-28
S18	W. Michigan	W, 48-34
S25	Nebraska	
O 2	@ Memphis	
O 9	@ Colorado	
O16	Iowa St.	
O23	@ Kansas	
O30	Texas Tech	
N 6	@ Oklahoma	
N13	Texas A&M	
N20	@ Kansas St.	

NEBRASKA

Record 3-0

S 1	@ Iowa	W, 42-7
S11	California	W, 49-0
S18	S. Mississippi	W, 20-13
S 26	@ Missouri	
S 2	Oklahoma St.	
S 9	Iowa St.	
S 23	@ Texas	
S 30	@ Kansas	
S 6	Texas A&M	
S 13	Kansas St.	
S 26	@ Colorado	

45-38, keeping alive its national title hopes.

Missouri went on to finish 7-5. The Tigers improved to 8-4 last year, including a 34-31 victory over West Virginia in the Insight.com Bowl. Missouri fell 20-13 to Nebraska in Lincoln.

The Tigers lost 88.2 percent of their offense in quarterback Corby Jones and tailback Devin West but have scored 79 points in opening the 1999 season 2-0.

Missouri held off Alabama-Birmingham 31-28 in its opener Sept. 4, then had an early idle week before defeating Western Michigan 48-34.

FILLING WEST'S SHOES

Missouri's new starting tailback has done a pretty good impersonation of the All-American he's replacing.

DeVaughn Black had 140 yards on 25 carries and his number was called 10 straight times on the game-saving drive in a 31-28 season-opening victory over Alabama-Birmingham.

Coach Larry Smith said the performance reminded him of Devin West, who set a school single-season rushing record with 1,578 yards last season.

"If it ain't broken, don't fix it," Smith said. "He had a hot hand, and the offensive line was coming off the ball, and they were a little tired and sagging."

So was Black, though only he knew.

"I'm not gonna lie, I was tired," Black said. "But if we had to keep going, I could have kept going. That was a crucial time."

Missouri, which blew at least two victories due to not-so-special teams play in an 8-4 season last year, survived to win for the seventh time in eight games at home. The Tigers also scored on a blocked punt by Justin Smith in the first quarter.

"We were a very sporadic, erratic team," Smith said. "We were good enough to win, and

that's about it."

Black followed that performance by rushing 32 times for 205 yards and two touchdowns against Western Michigan.

Tentative 2 Deeps

NEBRASKA OFFENSE

SE	3	Matt Davison**	6-1	180	Jr.
	9	Wilson Thomas	6-6	210	Fr.
LT	69	Adam Julch***	6-5	320	Sr.
	66	Jon Rutherford*	6-3	295	So.
LG	63	James Sherman***	6-4	295	Sr.
	77	Toni Fonoti	6-4	330	Fr.
C	54	Dom nic Raiola*	6-2	295	So.
	51	Matt Baldwin**	6-2	265	Sr.
RG	55	Russ Hochstein**	6-3	280	Jr.
	64	Steve Alstadt	6-5	275	So.
RT	58	Dave Volk*	6-5	295	So.
	75	Kyle Kollmorgen*	6-5	290	So.
TE	85	T.J. DeBates***	6-3	250	Sr.
and	87	Tracey Wistram	6-5	220	So.
QB	7	Eric Crouch*	6-1	195	So.
	14	Jeff Perino*	6-2	210	Sr.
FB	15	Willie Miller**	6-1	240	Jr.
	22	Ben Kingston**	6-1	240	Sr.
IB	38	Dan Alexander**	6-0	245	Jr.
	36	Correll Buckhalter**	6-0	225	Jr.
WB	82	Sean Applegate**	5-9	185	Sr.
and	12	Bobby Newcombe**	6-0	195	Jr.
PK	26	Josh Brown	6-2	185	Fr.

NEBRASKA DEFENSE

	57	Steve Wynn	6-1	210	Jr.
	56	Heon Lee	6-1	210	Jr.
	55	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	54	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	53	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	52	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	51	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	50	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	49	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	48	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	47	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	46	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	45	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	44	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	43	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	42	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	41	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	40	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	39	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	38	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	37	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	36	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	35	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	34	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	33	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	32	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	31	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	30	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	29	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	28	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	27	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	26	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	25	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	24	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	23	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	22	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	21	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	20	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	19	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	18	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	17	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	16	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	15	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	14	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	13	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	12	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	11	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	10	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	9	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	8	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	7	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	6	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	5	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	4	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	3	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	2	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.
	1	Chris Jones	6-1	210	Jr.

Tentative 2 Deeps

MISSOURI DEFENSE

	Pat Duffy				
	Danoy McCarr				
	Minguel				
	Neal G				
	Marion				
	Adrian Harden				
	Steve Anderson				
	Terrell Junneach				
	Justin Smith*	6-4	240	Jr.	
	Daryl Whittington*	6-4	240	Jr.	
	Berry Odum	6-4	240	Jr.	
	Michael Clay				
	Jamonte Robinson				
	Sean Doyle				
	Carlos Posey				
	Larry Hollingsworth				
	Larence Jones				
	Gary Anthony				
	Larence Curry				
	Andre Robinson*				
	Vince Sebo*	6-1	240	Jr.	

MISSOURI OFFENSE

WR	8	Kareem Wise*	6-3	218	Sr.
	9	Travis Garvin	6-1	182	Fr.
LT	74	Aaron Crittendon*	6-5	315	So.
	78	Rob Droege	6-5	284	Fr.
LG	83	Mike Hayes	6-3	296	So.
	60	Chris Ryan	6-3	284	So.
	76	Rob Ritt***	6-3	289	Sr.
	70	A.J. Ricker	6-3	268	Fr.
RG	71	Joe Glauberman*	6-3	282	Jr.
	59	Adrian Cole	6-4	310	So.
RT	72	Justin Bland*	6-6	321	So.
	73	Brad Smith	6-6	294	Sr.
TE	85	Dwayne Blackley*	6-4	288	So.
	87	Brandon Ford*	6-3	245	So.
WR	84	Kent Layman***	5-11	185	Sr.
	24	Eric Spencer*	6-1	170	So.
QB	11	Jim Dougherty	6-4	190	So.
	14	Kirk Farmer	6-5	216	Fr.
TB	22	DeVaughn Black*	5-11	213	Sr.
	2	Zain Gurnore*	6-1	220	So.
FB	30	T.J. Leon	6-0	215	Fr.
	49	Joe Chirumbolo	6-2	220	Fr.
PK	1	Brad Hammerich*	6-3	182	So.

PICKS

Brian Hill
Editor

Nebraska 27, Missouri 14

Nebraska opens its conference season, returning to the scene of its miracle finish in 1997. The Huskers won't need a miracle, but Missouri plays them tough, especially at home. After the wakeup call from Southern Mississippi, Nebraska shouldn't take anything for granted.

Mike Hubback
Contributing Editor

Nebraska 17, Missouri 7

Missouri's strength, like Nebraska's, is defense. And the Tigers figure to be playing with a lot of emotion when Nebraska returns to the scene of what Missouri fans probably consider the crime of 1997. The Cornhuskers have enough offense to win, but this should be a Nebraska-Missouri game of old, hard-hitting and low-scoring.

Terry Douglass
Grand Island Independent
Sports Editor

Nebraska 42, Missouri 17

No miracles necessary this time as the revamped Cornhusker offense starts to hit its stride. A bonus prediction: Matt Davison will catch at touchdown pass.

Joe Walljasper
Inside Missouri Sports
Editor

Nebraska 21, Missouri 8

Missouri jumps to an 8-0 halftime lead thanks to safety and a defensive touchdown — the extra point is no good. At the half, the assistant attorney general of Nebraska phones the MU locker room and reminds the Missouri coaching staff of the trouble and expense Nebraska fans endured trying to procure tickets to the game. He threatens litigation if Missouri wins. The Tigers dutifully roll over in the second half.

MILESTONE RECEPTIONS

Sophomore tight end Dwayne Blakley tied a team record with three touchdown catches against Western Michigan.

Blakley's scores came from 4, 10 and 7 yards. He finished with five catches for 40 yards.

Senior wide receiver Kent Layman is

closing in on Missouri's career top-10 for receiving yardage. He's gained 1,058 yards in his career and needs 88 to pass Harold Burnine to 10th place. He enters the Nebraska game with 50 career catches for 1,058 yards.

QUARTERBACK DUO

The Tigers have used two quarterbacks in both games. Sophomore Jim Dougherty suffered a sprained left knee in the opener, and redshirt freshman Kirk Farmer played the entire second half.

Dougherty also started the second game and completed 9 of 13 passes for 96 yards and a touchdown. Farmer completed 6 of 10 for 89 yards and three touchdowns.

OUTLAND CANDIDATE

Senior center Rob Riti is one of 15 players on the pre-season Outland Trophy "watch" list by the Football Writers Association of America.

Riti was a preseason All-American by many publications, including *Playboy*, the *Sporting News*, *Student Advantage*, *Football News*, *Athlon*, and others. He is the holder of the Missouri squat lift record — 1,000 pounds. Riti has started 34 consecutive games at Missouri, during three seasons in which the Tigers have ranked among the nation's top nine teams in rushing yards per game.

In 1998, he graded out at 86 percent for the season, with 59 knockdown blocks, and was a first-team all-Big 12 selection.

DEFENSE GETS TESTS

The Tiger defense got a wake-up call in the season opener against UAB, but the numbers were a bit deceiving. Half of the Blazers' 28 points were scored against the MU special teams, and 69 of UAB's 292 yards came on one draw play late in the fourth quarter when the game had already been decided.

There are high expectations for the Missouri defense in 1999, and not just because the group was the team's third leading scorer a year ago when the Tigers scored six defensive touchdowns.

In the second game, Missouri had to contend with Western Michigan quarterback Tim Lester, the nation's fifth-ranked passer coming into the game. Lester completed 25 of 39 passes for 260 yards and four touchdowns.

Smith has said it many times that this is the most experienced and deepest



Linebacker Barry Odom (39) is in his third year as a starter. He had a key interception against Western Michigan.

defensive unit with which he's been blessed in six seasons at Missouri.

SMITH IN SIXTH SEASON

Larry Smith is in his sixth season at Missouri (23rd overall) with a record of 28-31-1. He became Mizzou's 30th head football coach on Dec. 15, 1993.

With 17 years as a head coach in NCAA Division I before coming to MU, Smith was the most experienced coach ever hired by a Big Eight Conference school. He has a 23-year career record of 138-111-7, and coached previously at Tulane (18-27, 1976-79), Arizona (48-28-3, 1980-86), and Southern California (44-25-3, 1987-92). He was out of coaching in 1993.

Smith is one of only two active coaches who have taken four schools to bowl games, along with Lou Holtz (South Carolina), and one of only four who've ever done it (Earle Bruce and Bill Mallory). Smith ranks 12th among active coaches in career victories.

COACH'S WIFE DIES

Carlalee Ankney, the wife of Missouri defensive coordinator Moe Ankney, passed away at home early Saturday morning after a long battle with cancer. She was 56.

RATED FOES DIFFICULT

Missouri has won 13 of its last 18 regular-season games — with the five losses coming at the hands of two No. 1 teams — the 1997 Nebraska unit and last year's Ohio State Buckeyes — and, also in 1998 to No. 2 Kansas State, No. 6 Texas A&M, and No. 7 Nebraska. ■



Defense Gets Save

Linebacker Jackson scores twice as Huskers hold off Golden Eagles

**Story by Mike Babcock
Photos by Scott Bruhn**

Julius Jackson clearly was enjoying his moment in the spotlight.

He played fullback in high school, he told reporters following Nebraska's surprisingly difficult 20-13 victory against Southern Mississippi, "so I was able to show some of my skills when I caught the ball. After I scored, I was like: 'Man, they need to move me to offense. I can do both.'"

Cornhusker secondary coach George Darlington, who was standing behind the ring of cameras in the South Stadium lounge watching the proceedings, added a footnote.

"With his hands? No way," Darlington said with a laugh.

Defensive coordinator Charlie McBride sided with Darlington. "He's got great hands, Julius," said McBride. "If you look at them real close, they look like the bottoms of skillets."

Jackson was undaunted. "This is a dream game for anybody on defense," said the senior weakside linebacker. "It's just like a dream come true. It hasn't hit me yet, but it will, eventually."

Defensive players dream of scoring

touchdowns. And Jackson scored not one but two, which is as many touchdowns as Nebraska's defense has allowed in three games this season.

Jackson was asked if he realized that. "I do now," he said. "I didn't, but now I know."

If Jackson's hands are, as McBride suggested, like the bottoms of skillets, then Southern Mississippi was fried in them on a sunny afternoon, before another record crowd at Memorial Stadium.

Afterward, many in the throng of 77,826 chanted "defense" as the Cornhuskers left the field.

The game was punctuated with those chants, in fact. "The crowd was phenomenal," Jackson said. "You don't know how it feels when you have the whole stadium yelling for defense."

"That sends a rush through you that brings the intensity up another level."

Not that Nebraska's defense needed an intensity boost. The Blackshirts appeared to be ready from the game's first play from scrimmage, an 8-yard sack by weakside linebacker Eric Johnson.

Cornback Keyuo Craver gets to Southern Mississippi quarterback Jeff Kelly on a blitz and tips the pass. Craver had four pass breakups and two interceptions.



Eric Crouch, in his first start of the season, rushed 16 times for 26 yards and completed 6 of 10 passes for 66 yards. He was intercepted twice.

"We did blitz a lot," said McBride, who turned his charges loose on Southern Mississippi quarterback Jeff Kelly. "We blitzed pretty much the whole game," rover Mike Brown said.

Though Kelly never backed off, the pressure did produce results.

On the Golden Eagles' second series, second-and-8 from their own

35-yard line, Cornhusker rush end Kyle Vanden Bosch sacked Kelly and jarred the ball loose.

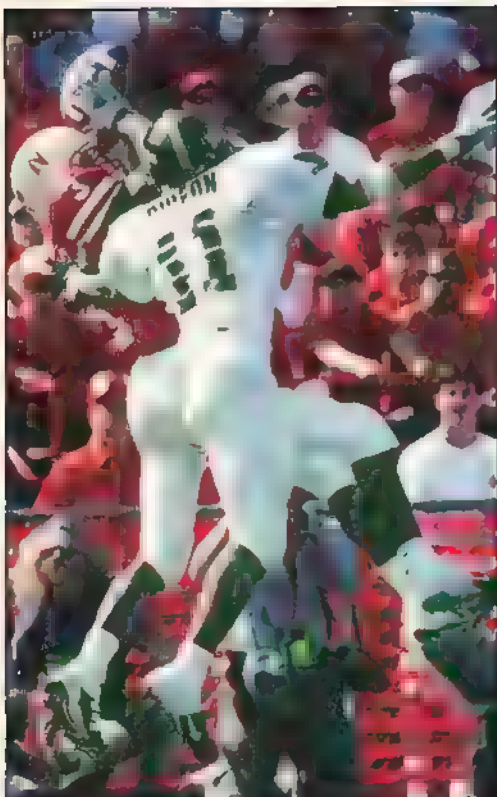
"I just put a little move on the tackle, and that quarterback, he looked like a big hamburger out there," Vanden Bosch said of the first of his two sacks. "I wanted to just clobber him.

"He didn't see me coming, and I

got a good hit on him."

The ball ended up in the hands of Jackson, who ran 16 yards to score.

"I think the thing must have bounced off his facemask about four times before he really did catch it," said McBride. "But I'll tell you one thing, the world sprint champion couldn't have caught him."



Keyuo Craver intercepts a pass intended for Southern Mississippi's Sherrod Gideon with 5:30 remaining, the first of his two fourth-quarter pickoffs.

Jackson's second touchdown, and Nebraska's last, was equally opportunistic.

Cornerback Keyuo Craver deflected a Kelly pass, which Jackson intercepted and returned 28 yards. That touchdown and a two-point conversion turned a 13-12 deficit into the final score.

"You're waiting, hoping somebody doesn't come in there and take it away from you," Jackson said of the ball, which seemed to hang in the air. "I was fortunate to catch it and just run away with it."

Good fortune had little to do with that play, or any the defense made, according to McBride.

"Great players make great plays," he said.

Consider Craver, on whom Kelly tried to pick because he's a sophomore and because the cornerback on the other side is All-America candidate Ralph Brown. Craver intercepted two passes in the final five and a half minutes, as the Golden Eagles gave Nebraska fans some anxious moments.

The first came at the Cornhusker 8-yard line, with 5:30 remaining.

The second came at the Cornhusker 1-yard line, with only 1:17 remaining.

"It wasn't anything spectacular," said Craver. "I just went up there and

4TH & 1 INCHES

Notes And Quotes From The Southern Miss. Game

KNEE INJURY SIDELINES LINEBACKER JOHNSON

Starting weakside linebacker Eric Johnson suffered a sprained left MCL and is expected to be sidelined four to six weeks. Julius Jackson, who alternates with Johnson, suffered a bruised knee and had to leave the game briefly. He was replaced by sophomore Mark Vedral.

"Vedral came in and did a good job," said defensive coordinator Charlie McBride. "It just goes to show you that any one kid, he could be sitting there and not prepared, so I talk to the kids. 'You may be third-team, but all of a sudden you may be first. And if you don't prepare yourself, you're going to let 10 guys down. So it's really important. You can't just wander through practice during the week.'"

Other injuries were to rush end Aaron Wills, who suffered a shoulder stinger and a sprained AC joint in the other shoulder; kick returner Randy Stella, who suffered a pulled abdominal muscle; and defensive tackle Loran Kaiser, who came away with a sore right shoulder.

Stella had a kickoff return that would have gone for 94 yards and a touchdown, but the play was called back because of a penalty. Stella was credited with a 50-yard return.

NEWCOMBE HAS TOUGH START AS WINGBACK, PUNT RETURNER

Junior Bobby Newcombe had a tough first game as a wingback and punt returner. His mishandled punt set up Southern Mississippi's first touchdown, and he couldn't hold on to an Eric Crouch pass in the end zone in the second quarter. Nebraska did score on that possession, however.

"I just got real excited because I burned the guy (defensive back) pretty good," Newcombe said. "I was wide-open, started accelerating, didn't know I had my fourth or fifth gear there to track that ball down."

"And I took my eyes off it at the last second."

GOLDEN EAGLES RUN 28 MORE PLAYS

Southern Mississippi finished with a 32:19-27:41 advantage in time of possession, running 79 offensive plays to Nebraska's 51. "It seemed like we were out there all the time," said Cornhusker rush end Kyle Vanden Bosch. "We really had to dig deep and tell ourselves to get after it."

The defensive players weren't complaining, however.

"We're in pretty good shape," rover and co-captain Mike Brown said. "We love playing the game. We want to be out there all the time. If you're tired, send somebody else in."

"If we have to play 100 plays, we'll be there."

Cornerback Keyuo Craver had to come out of the game briefly because of cramping. "I wanted to (get back in), but I couldn't hold it in," he said. "When those cramps came in, I just couldn't hold that facial expression. So they (trainers) wouldn't let me get back out there."

NO 100-YARD RUSHERS THIS SEASON

The Cornhuskers have yet to have a 100-yard rusher this season. The last time they began a season without a 100-rusher in three games was 1988: Texas A&M, Utah State, UCLA.

In the fourth game that season, three Cornhuskers rushed for more than 100 yards.

OTHER NOTABLES

— Nebraska's 185 yards of total offense were the lowest since the Oklahoma game in 1993 (179).

— Nebraska junior split end Matt Davison has now caught at least one pass in 20 consecutive games. He had two catches for 19 yards against the Golden Eagles and leads the team with seven receptions for 106 yards for the season.

— Redshirt freshman Wilson Thomas got his first career start, as Nebraska opened in a spread formation, with two split ends.

— Southern Mississippi wide receiver Todd Pinkston, who had 11 receptions for 163 yards and one touchdown: "Nebraska came out and was in the right place at the right time. My hat is off to them."

— Golden Eagles quarterback Jeff Kelly, who was 23-of-45 passes for 268 yards and two touchdowns, with four interceptions: "Nebraska has made a name for itself by hassling the quarterback and getting in your face. They got the best of me sometimes, but we made some big plays, too."

— Southern Mississippi Coach Jeff Bower: "Nebraska has an impressive football team. Someone said: 'You knocked them out of the top 10.' I say, give us a little credit." ■

got the ball. The main thing was just, everybody did their part. I did my part catching the ball."

Mike Brown agreed. He wasn't surprised that Craver would come up with big plays. "Keyuo is a great athlete and a great football player," he said. "We expect those things from him."

What wasn't expected was that Nebraska would need those interceptions by Craver, the touchdowns by Jackson, five quarterback sacks and overall superb play by the defense to win.

The Cornhuskers were heavily favored, presumably based on the assumption that their offense would contribute its share, which, for reasons apparently unknown, it did not.

"Offensively, it was, without question, a very difficult day," Coach Frank Solich said. "It became a day where we did really not get anything going in the running game, with any kind of consistency."

"There is no question we need to execute a lot better than what we executed today. Why the execution is at the level that it's at right now, I'm not quite sure . . . so I don't know."

"I don't believe that moving personnel around affected us all that much."

The personnel changes to which he referred were much discussed throughout the week. Bobby Newcombe, the starting quarterback the first two games, was moved to wingback. And Eric Crouch, the No. 2 quarterback and an occasional flanker, became the starting quarterback.

In addition, Dan Alexander became the starting I-back after DeAngelo Evans quit the team.

The only reminder that Evans had been a member of the team was a large sign hanging on a wall in the southeast corner of the east stands. The hand-made sign said: Where's DeAngelo?

Those changes, in the wake of backup I-back Correll Buckhalter's three-day absence from practices and meetings the previous week, created the impression of a team in turmoil.

Not so, according to Solich. "It was not an easy week for this football team or the staff," he said. "But I don't believe that distractions played a role in the outcome of this game."

Alexander was equally adamant. "I don't think the off-field distractions caused any of the mental breakdowns or any of the other times we were getting beat on plays," he said.

For a second consecutive week, the Cornhuskers were unable to establish

a running game. They didn't pick up a first down until just over 12 minutes remained in the first half, and they finished with only eight. They ran 28 fewer plays than Southern Mississippi and finished with only 185 yards, total.

In addition, they undermined their own offensive efforts, losing three of five fumbles, throwing two pass interceptions and being penalized nine times for 62 yards.

"That was really a ridiculous number of penalties," said Solich.

If not for the defense and the punting of Dan Hadenfeldt, who averaged 49.8 yards on eight punts, well, you get the idea. "We had five turnovers. It's not going to look very pretty offensively," Solich said. "I would have thought that we would have really struggled with five turnovers."

You can imagine how he finished that. "And we did," he said.

A 50-yard Hadenfeldt punt, downed by tight end Aaron Golliday at the Southern Mississippi 3-yard line, contributed to Nebraska's second touchdown, early in the second quarter.

The Golden Eagles managed only 1 yard on three plays and punted, and Nebraska had good field position at the Southern Mississippi 46-yard line, following Joe Walker's 8-yard return.

Eight plays later, fullback Willie Miller scored from 8 yards out.

"We kept telling ourselves, we're going to win it on the defensive side," said Vanden Bosch. "There are going to be days when our offense will struggle, and there are going to be days when our defense will probably struggle. We knew going down the stretch it was going to come down to us."

In this case, that meant not only stopping the opposition but also scoring touchdowns.

"As a defense, we're always looking to shut down the run, shut down the pass and all that," Vanden Bosch said. "But we're always looking for the big play. Every time we get out on the field, (middle linebacker) Carlos (Polk) is in the huddle saying we've got to score."

"That's the sign of a good defense, I think, not only getting done what needs to be done but also making the big plays, getting interceptions and fumble recoveries and scoring yourself."

Everyone agreed the defense gave a good effort.

But could someone ask any more of it?

"Probably more touchdowns," said Jackson, the Cornhuskers' Mr. Touchdown for a day. ■

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Nebraska defensive tackle Jeremy Slechta pulls down Southern Mississippi quarterback Jeff Kelly for one of five Husker sacks.

Southern Mississippi vs. Nebraska Sept. 18, 1999 Lincoln

Score By Quarters

Southern Miss.	7	0	6	0	—	13
Nebraska	6	6	8	0	—	20

Team Stats

	USM	NU
First Downs	15	8
Rushing	3	5
Passing	11	3
Penalty	1	0
Rushing Attempts	34	41
Yards Gained Rushing	74	131
Yards Lost Rushing	49	12
Net Yards Rushing	25	119
Net Yards Passing	268	66
Passes Attempted	45	10
Passes Completed	23	6
Had Intercepted	4	2
Total Plays	79	51
Total Net Yards	293	185
Avg. Gain Per Play	3.7	3.6
Fumbles Lost	2-2	5-3
Penalties-Yards	5-24	9-62
Punts-Yards	8-352	8-398
Avg. Per Punt	44.0	49.8
Punt Returns-Yards	5-50	6-56
Interceptions-Yards	2-0	4-46
Fumble Returns-Yards	0-0	1-16
Kickoff Returns-Yards	2-36	1-50
Possession Time	32:19	27:41

Scoring

N — Julius Jackson 16-yard fumble recovery (kick failed)

USM — Todd Pinkston 8-yard pass from Jeff Kelly (Brant Hanna kick)

N — Willie Miller 8-yard run (run failed)

USM — Sherrod Gideon 5-yard pass from Jeff Kelly (pass failed)

N — Jackson 28-yard interception return (Dan Alexander run)

Att. — 77,826

Temp. — 75

Individual Statistics

Nebraska

RUSHING					
Name	Att	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Alexander, D.	16	54	3.4	11	0
Miller, W.	8	38	4.8	14	1
Crouch, E.	16	26	1.6	7	0
Buckhalter, C.	1	1	1.0	1	0

PASSING				
Name	C-A-I	Pct.	Yds.	TD
Crouch, E.	6-10-2	60.0	66	0

RECEIVING					
Name	No.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Gibson, J.	2	19	9.5	11	0
Davison, M.	2	19	9.5	14	0
Alexander, D.	1	27	27.0	27	0
Miller, W.	1	1	1.0	1	0

PUNTING				
Name	No.	Yds.	Avg.	LNG
Hadenfeldt, D.	8	398	49.8	59

PUNT RETURNS					
Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Walker, J.	4	37	9.3	24	0
Craver, C.	1	14	14.0	14	0
Newcombe, B.	1	5	5.0	5	0

KICKOFF RETURNS					
Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Stella, R.	1	50	50.0	50	0

DEFENSE						
Name	UT	AT	TT	FL	Int.	Sacks
Brown, M.	8	4	12	0	0	0
Vanden Bosch, K.	4	5	9	3	23	0
Willis, A.	5	3	8	0	0	0

Slechta, J.	3	2	5	1-6	0	1-6
Jackson, J.	3	2	5	1-9	1-28	1-9
Polk, C.	1	4	5	1-1	0	0
Lohr, J.	1	3	4	0	0	0
Finley, C.	3	0	3	0	1-0	0
Vedra, M.	2	1	3	0	0	0
Ortiz, T.	1	2	3	1-1	0	0
Craver, K.	2	0	2	0	2-18	0
Brown, R.	2	0	2	0	0	0
Groce, D.	2	0	2	0	0	0
Johnson, E.	1	1	2	2-9	0	1-8
Kaiser, L.	4	2	2	0	0	0
Shaw, B.	1	0	1	0	0	0
Kelsay, C.	1	0	1	0	0	0
Applegate, S.	1	0	1	0	0	0
Stella, R.	1	0	1	0	0	0
Gehman, T.	1	0	1	0	0	0
Warren, S.	0	1	1	0	0	0
Burrow, J.	0	1	1	0	0	0
Ryan, E.	0	1	1	0	0	0
Booker, D.	0	1	1	0	0	0
Smith, J.	0	1	1	0	0	0

Southern Miss.

RUSHING					
Name	Att.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Nix, D.	29	70	2.4	9	0
Kelly, J.	5	45	9.0	0	0

PASSING				
Name	C-A-I	Pct.	Yds.	TD
Kelly, J.	23-45-4	51.1	268	2

RECEIVING					
Name	No.	Yds.	YPC	LNG	TD
Pinkston, T.	11	163	14.8	38	1
Gideon, S.	8	81	10.1	25	1
Gulley, J.	3	16	5.3	10	0

Fowler, D.	1	8	8.0	8	0
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FIELD GOALS

Name	Att.	Good	LNG
Brache, I.	0	1	0

PUNTING

Name	No.	Yds.	Avg.	LNG
Purser, J.	8	352	44.0	53

PUNT RETURNS

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Mills, S.	3	30	10.0	15	0
Gideon, S.	2	20	10.0	10	0

KICKOFF RETURNS

Name	No.	Yds.	YPR	LNG	TD
Mills, S.	1	19	19.0	19	0
Francis, B.	1	17	17.0	17	0

DEFENSE

Name	UT	AT	TT	FL	Int.	Sacks
Slaughter, T.J.	4	6	10	1-2	0	0
Thomas, A.	4	4	8	2-4	0	1-2
Williams, C.	3	5	8	0	0	0
Trahan, T.	2	5	7	1-1	0	0
Scott, DeQ.	3	2	5	0	0	0
Parnish, T.	3	1	4	0	1-0	0
Walls, R.	3	1	4	0	1-0	0
Scott, C.	3	0	3	0	0	0
Magee, R.	1	2	3	0	0	0
Villalonga, M.	1	1	2	0	0	0
Barnes, L.	1	1	2	0	0	0
Stewart, D.	0	2	2	0	0	0
Pinkston, T.	1	0	1	0	0	0
Moore, K.	1	0	1	0	0	0
Pinkston, J.	1	0	1	0	0	0
Fowler, D.	1	0	1	0	0	0
Hardy, L.	1	0	1	0	0	0
McCrony, P.	0	1	1	0	0	0
Yates, C.	0	1	1	0	0	0

It's Tight End By Committee

**Recruiting success
leaves position
well-stocked**

By Mike Babcock

At tight end for Nebraska, a cast of thousands.

Practice looks like a casting call for a motion picture epic.

OK. There aren't that many. But there were six on the travel roster for the opener at Iowa, and they all played at least one down on offense, with four of them catching passes.

Only three tight ends caught passes all of last season. "So they shouldn't be complaining about playing time," receivers coach Ron Brown said following practice the next week.

"We got the ball spread around well."

Keeping the tight ends happy might not be quite as easy as the season progresses, however, because "they all want to play," said Brown. "Right now they're very team-oriented guys, and a number of them are younger players, so they're just kind of happy to be where they're at."

"Obviously as time goes on, those young players will become more mature, more experienced and more confident, and of course everybody wants more at that point. But I think one of the things I've really appreciated around here about the tight ends is that they've got an offensive line mentality when it comes to their buddies, the buddy system, playing together, understanding their roles."

In addition, the Cornhusker offense utilizes double-tight-end alignments nearly 50 percent of the time, according to Brown. And on rare occasions, it has even put three tight ends on the field at the same time. So there's a much greater opportunity to play than might be apparent at first glance.

The top tight ends are senior T.J. DeBates and sophomore Tracey Wistrom, the best receiver of the bunch. After them, in order of eligibility, are senior Damien Bauman, junior Jake McKee and redshirted freshman Aaron Golliday and Jon Bowling.

Freshman Trevor Johnson is redshirt-ing.

Bauman is a transfer from Central Florida. McKee is a walk-on.

Nebraska has so many scholarship tight ends right now that there has been talk of one of them being moved to another position, a possibility Brown does not favor. "Selfishly, I would like to keep them all," he said. "You want to do what's best for the team. But so far so good."

The Cornhuskers have been extremely successful in recruiting tight ends the past three years, getting Wistrom, Golliday, Bowling and Johnson. And they already have an oral commitment to accept a scholarship from Millard West High School senior Chris Septak.

The 6-foot-4, 230-pound Septak, who caught 32 passes for 732 yards and 16 touchdowns as a junior, ran an electronically timed :04.6 in the 40-yard dash in Nebraska's summer camp.

Such physical qualities should serve him well in the Cornhuskers' offensive system.

Size is an important consideration because "you see massive tight ends nowadays, kids that are 270, 280," Brown said. "A lot of schools are playing with the 280-plus tight ends in there."

"So you look for a guy who has the potential with size. But we've always had two types of tight ends around here. We've had the blocker, smash-mouth kind of guy, Tim Carpenter, Matt Shaw, William Washington, T.J. DeBates, guys who come off the ball, do a great job of blocking."

"And then you have the streamlined guys, Johnny Mitchell, who was a big guy but really a receiver, Gerald Armstrong, Trumane Bell, Sheldon Jackson, quick, almost wide receiver-type guys."

Wistrom fits in the latter category, physically. He's 6-5 and 220 pounds.

But "he's a surprisingly strong kid," said Brown. "He's very agile. He has excellent hands. He has a great understanding of the game. And he's a great competitor. So it worked out for him."

Wistrom developed more quickly



T.J. DeBates (85), Aaron Golliday (99) and Tracey Wistrom (87) have all caught passes this season.

than expected, and capped his first collegiate season by catching three passes for 41 yards and a touchdown in the Holiday Bowl game.

He was considered a project when he was recruited out of high school in Webb City, Mo., following brother Grant, a two-time All-America rush end and the Lombardi Award winner in 1997. Tracey was listed at 205 pounds when he arrived. But he was probably closer to 190 pounds.

"To be honest, we really didn't expect Tracey to step in as a freshman," Brown said. "We thought it was going to take a good three years for him just to get some meat on his bones. You sensed that he could gain weight like Grant did. And he was the right kind of person, the right fit in many respects. We took a chance, but we felt like we knew enough about Tracey that it was a good gamble."

Nebraska hadn't been distinguishing itself in recruiting tight ends. The year before Wistrom arrived (1996), the scholarship class hadn't included any tight ends, and the four years before that, only one recruit listed as a tight end ever really played the position — Sheldon Jackson.

DeBates, a scholarship recruit in 1995, was listed as a linebacker.

Starting rush end Aaron Wills was listed as a tight end-defensive end in 1995. Jackson and Dorrick Roy, who eventually transferred, were members of the 1994 recruiting class. Josh Heskew was listed as a tight end-nose guard (he became a center) in the 1993 recruiting class. And T.J. Scribner and Ryan Terwilliger were listed as tight ends or linebackers in the 1992 recruit-



Golliday Could Be 'Do-It-All' Player

York product has 'great size,' and 'he's quick'

ing class.

As a result, "for a while there, we were a little short on tight ends and had to kind of intra-recruit," said Brown. Players were moved from other positions, most notably Tim Carpenter and Vershan Jackson, the regular tight ends on the 1997 national championship team, who were converted fullbacks.

Carpenter caught only two passes in four seasons at Nebraska, one each as a freshman and sophomore and both against Pacific, which no longer plays football. But he was a dominating blocker.

"Because we are such a run-oriented football team, you've got to have blockers," said Brown. "Because we want to throw the ball, we've got to have some streamlined receivers, too."

"It wouldn't be considered the most balanced offense in terms of run-pass ratio. That creates a gap. You're looking for great blockers so you can run the base of your offense, but if you're going to throw somewhat effectively, you've got to have guys who can get down field."

"So you've got to recruit, to the best of your ability, receivers everybody else is getting. That's why you have the two different types of tight ends here, heavy-duty blockers and streamlined receivers."

To some extent, the same is true at the other receiver positions. Wingbacks and split ends also have to prove they're proficient at blocking if they expect to get on the field. "Obviously, if you can get one guy who can do it all, then that guy doesn't leave the field very much," said Brown.

But even then at least one other tight end will play and possibly two. ■

Aaron Golliday is a tight end for the new millennium. Or could be.

The redshirted freshman from York, Neb., "has tremendous potential," said Nebraska receivers coach Ron Brown. "I think he could be one of the great tight ends here before he's done."

Golliday, who's 6-foot-4 and 272 pounds, has "great size. He's quick. I wouldn't say he's just a blazer in speed, but he's got quickness. He moves like a much smaller man. And he has soft hands."

"He's got a great chance to be a do-it-all type tight end."

That Golliday is capable of handling the blocking responsibilities of Cornhusker tight ends is readily apparent. Nebraska has never had a bigger tight end, at such a young age.

What is less apparent, probably, is his ability to catch the ball and advance it. He was an all-state running back as a high school senior, rushing for 1,923 yards and 21 touchdowns.

"He's an outstanding athlete, an explosive football player," Brown said.

Golliday is among three scholarship tight ends recruited from the state the last two years. Jon Bowling from Lincoln Southeast and Trevor Johnson from Lincoln Northeast are the others.

"We're just blessed in the state of Nebraska to have such great tight ends," said Brown. "Where would you find, in the last few years, a combination of Aaron Golliday and Jon Bowling, and then Trevor Johnson the year after that. This has been a tremendous tight-end state the last three years."

And next season, a fourth is expected to join in the mix. Chris Septak, a senior at Omaha Millard West, has already made an oral commitment to accept a scholarship from the Cornhuskers.

Although there are no guarantees, Nebraska has the inside track on in-

state players, a fact that contributed to the Cornhuskers' recruiting Golliday, Bowling and Johnson.

Golliday was born in Topeka, Kan., and lived in Beaumont, Texas, before his family moved to York when he was in the second grade. His parents "weren't real big on the Husker lore like most homegrown Nebraska people are," Golliday said. "But gradually I started liking (the Cornhuskers)."

"You don't have to be a big fan to know Nebraska is winning national championships. The Huskers are always on TV. That's a big deal if you're from anywhere in the country I would think."

Kansas State also recruited him, and he considered going there "just because it was different. But if I was going to play football, I was going to come here," he said. "There's no comparison. If you're going to be an athlete, the facilities, the faculty and staff . . . I mean, there's really no comparison."

The big question Golliday had to answer was not whether he would go to Nebraska to play football but rather whether he would play football at the school to which he went.

He also was an outstanding high school basketball player.

Then Coach Tom Osborne told him a scholarship would be available to him if he decided to play football. And

after a recruiting visit to Kansas State, he made the decision.

Wildcats Coach Bill Snyder asked him to wait before contacting Osborne.

"But I called him (Osborne) the night I got back," said Golliday.

Recruiting tight ends is difficult because they're "not easy to find," Brown said.

Why? "I think they've become offensive line type guys; I don't know," he said. "There's so much multiple wide receivers on the field, people using their backs (as receivers)."

"That's why I'm saying here in Nebraska . . . I would take those kids if they lived any place in the country."



Aaron Golliday
was a running
back at York.



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It's just been an amazing thing to have (in-state) tight ends like that. You'd take those three in a minute, from anywhere. They are great young players. We're very blessed to have that

"And we want to try to use them the best way we can."

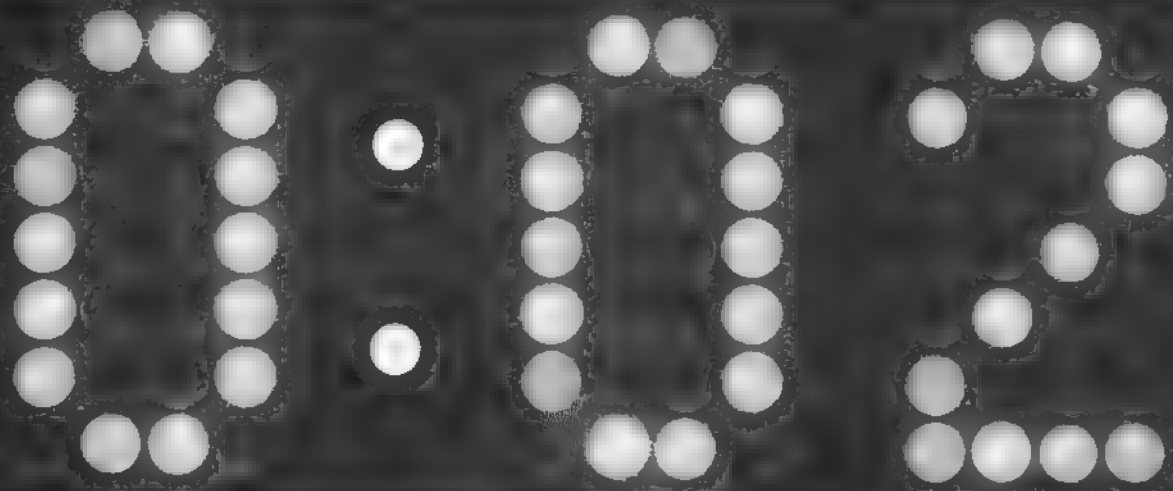
For Golliday, that means as a receiving threat as well as a blocker.

"The thing I've been trying to get Aaron to really focus on is his ability to be intense through every practice," Brown said. "He has been an OK practice player but could go to another level in a normal practice day. That's going to come, I believe, with maturity."

As for personal qualities, "he's the right kind of person, a classy individual, quiet, humble. You don't hear a lot out of him, but I think he's got the makeup about him to work and get the job done. He's a tremendous young man, well brought up, very respectful," said Brown.

"He handles criticism well, and he handles compliments well. You don't really see him swaying. He's pretty steady through the whole thing. And he's playing with more confidence right now."

And, as the century ends, he's just beginning his career. ■



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He's Still Asked About It

After two years, "The Catch" is still fresh in many minds

By Steven Sipple

Matt Davison says he has been asked about the catch — you know the one — literally "thousands of times."

"Pretty much every day," said the Husker junior split end from Tecumseh, Neb.

He doesn't mind.

"It's not something I want to forget about," he said. "It was a great point in my career. But I can't seem to live it down. Everybody remembers me for that one thing. I'd like to remind them of a few other plays I've made, but they don't seem to be as important."

In terms of drama, Davison will have a hard time matching his catch in Nebraska's game at Missouri on Nov. 8, 1997. Maybe you remember: Seven seconds left. Third-and-10 on the Tigers' 12-yard line. Scott Frost zips a pass into the end zone intended for wingback Shevin Wiggins. The ball bounces off Wiggins' hands and then his foot before Davison dives and grabs it just before it hits the grass.

His touchdown sends the game into overtime and Nebraska goes on to win 45-38, keeping alive its national title hopes.

"What I need to do," Davison says, "is get into the end zone again."

Entering Nebraska's Sept. 18 home game against Southern Mississippi, Davison had 48 career catches for 713 yards, but his only touchdown came on the "flea kicker" or "line-drive Hail Mary" or whatever you want to call it.

"Our offense is pretty much run-oriented when we get into the red zone," he said. "We don't throw the ball much — just about not at all — when we get down there. And in my first two years here, I was a possession receiver, a short-yardage receiver."

"Hopefully this season I can get some balls thrown to me down the field and maybe break one and score a touchdown and get to celebrate a normal touchdown instead of getting tackled and mobbed in the end zone like I did at Missouri."

Davison has been a model of con-



Matt Davison had four catches for 69 yards in the opener against Iowa.

sistency. His 18-yard grab against Southern Mississippi extended his streak of games with at least one catch to 19. He caught 10 passes for a school-record 167 yards last season against Texas A&M and finished the season with 32 receptions, the most by a Husker receiver since Irving Fryar's 40 in 1983.

The 6-foot-1, 180-pound Davison has added 15 pounds to his lanky frame since coming to Nebraska from Tecumseh, Neb., High School, where he caught 63 passes for 1,314 yards and 20 touchdowns as a senior. As a junior he had state prep receiving records of 1,516 yards and 26 TDs and set a single-game state record with 313 receiving yards against Louisville.

"It's hard for me to gain a lot of muscle mass," he said recently. "I can

gain weight when we're not running as much. But when we start summer conditioning and practicing, I'm always sweating my butt off."

This week, before Saturday's Big 12 Conference game at Missouri, the affable Davison will field a ton of questions about his big catch in the 1997 game. He will answer the questions with a smile. He actually seems to look forward to it. He also looks forward to returning to the scene of the moment that made him famous.

"It's going to be fun," he said. "I'm going to go down to that end zone where I made the catch and kiss that spot in warm-ups."

He's joking of course. At least we think he was joking.

"Oh shoot," he said, "they'd kill me if I did it." ■

Huskers Romp in New Stadium

*Nebraska shuts out Oklahoma 24-0;
future All-American helps build field*

By Mike Babcock

It was unique in Nebraska football history. But it was hardly the most notable aspect of the Cornhuskers' 24-0 victory against Oklahoma that afternoon.

On the kickoff following Nebraska's first touchdown, the ball deflated and had to be replaced. You could look it up, to quote baseball legend Casey Stengel.

The pigskin went flat. Phizzzzzz...

The date was Oct. 13, 1923. The game was the first ever played at Memorial Stadium, which had yet to be completed and wouldn't be dedicated until a week later, with a scoreless tie.

A crowd estimated at 15,000 watched as Coach Fred Dawson's Cornhuskers took charge in the second half. Dave Noble, who served as captain in place of an injured Verne Lewellen, scored two touchdowns, and sophomore end Doug Myers ran 93 yards with a fumble for the other.

It was an appropriate beginning, certainly more so than the dedication-game tie with Kansas, for the venerable stadium, which has taken on a dramatically new look this season.

And it was one of Cornhusker football's most significant events during the 1920s.

Ed Weir was among those who worked on the construction of the stadium during the summer before his sophomore season. There were no scholarships, so every player who could find work did.

Weir worked for three years as a janitor at Lincoln's Scottish Rite Temple. He also played tackle on the Nebraska football team for three years, earning All-America honors the last two.

Even though comparing players from one era to another

TEAMS OF THE DECADE

Third in a
series
(1920-1929)



Ed Weir was an All-America tackle in 1924 and 1925.

Huskers Illustrated Team of the Decade, 1920-29

End	Clarence Swanson (1918-19-20-21)
End	Leo Scherer (1920-21-22)
Line	Ed Weir (1923-24-25)
Line	Dan McMullen (1926-27-28)
Line	Ray Richards (1927-28-29)
Line	Ted James (1926-27-28)
Line	Roy "Link" Lyman (1919-20-21-22)
Back	Glen Presnell (1925-26-27)
Back	Edward "Blue" Howell (1926-27-28)
Back	Dave Noble (1921-22-23)
Back	Verne Lewellen (1921-22-23)
Kicker	Ed Weir (1923-24-25)

is an exercise in futility, Weir transcended his time. A Cornhusker all-century team would be incomplete without him.

Walter Eckersall, whose All-America teams in 1924 and 1925 included Weir, wrote "Although a splendid tackle, Weir could have been used in any position on the team. In fact he was called back to punt, run and forward pass, and in each line of this triple role he performed faultlessly."

Notre Dame Coach Knute Rockne called Weir "the best tackle I have ever seen." Rockne estimated that the 6-foot, 191-pound native of Superior, Neb., made 80

percent of the tackles in Nebraska's 34-6 loss against his Fighting Irish and the Four Horsemen at South Bend, Ind., in 1924.

Though the Horsemen wouldn't be given their nickname by sportswriter Grantland Rice until after a 13-7 victory against Army in 1924, they played against Nebraska three times and won just that once.

The Cornhuskers defeated the Horsemen in 1922 (14-6) and again in 1923 (14-7). Those were Notre Dame's only losses during those seasons. Army also tied it in 1922.

The 1922 Nebraska-Notre Dame game was the last to be played at Nebraska Athletic Field, the predecessor to Memorial Stadium. The wooden stands were filled to overflowing as an estimated 15,000 paid to watch on Thanksgiving Day. Several thousand more watched for free from roof tops, trees, telephone poles and giant piles of coal just outside the east-west field.

Weir, a freshman, might have been among those who saw Chuck Hartley



Dan McMullen (left) was an All-America guard in 1928, and Ray Richards was an All-America tackle the next season.



score one touchdown and pass to Noble for another and add both extra-point kicks as Nebraska dominated the visitors.

A season later, with Weir playing left tackle, the Cornhusker defense again made two touchdowns hold up for a victory against Notre Dame. In addition to intercepting a pass, Weir threw a key block on a 42-yard touchdown run by Noble, who also scored the other touchdown.

Noble weighed 200 pounds, yet

had the speed of a sprinter.

The Notre Dame series, begun in 1915 after Minnesota dropped off the schedule, was arguably the most memorable during the 1920s, though it ended in 1925, because of what Notre Dame considered ill treatment of its players and officials after a 17-0 Cornhusker victory in Lincoln in 1925.

Nebraska dominated that final game, and again Weir was a key figure, partially blocking a punt to set up the first touchdown and kicking a 25-yard field goal as well as both extra points.

John "Choppy" Rhodes scored one touchdown, and John "Jug" Brown teamed with Avard Mandery on a 35-yard pass for the other. Weir and center Harold Hutchinson anchored the defense.

"I had a great guy behind me (defensively)," Weir once said of Hutchinson, who could easily have been included on the all-decade team. But Ted James was a two-time all-conference honoree, and Dan McMullen (1928) and Ray Richards (1929) both

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earned All-America honors.

There were other memorable moments during the decade, including a 10-0 victory at Pittsburgh in 1921, after which a Pittsburgh sports writer described Dawson's Cornhuskers as "man-killing mastodons." Pittsburgh Coach Pop Warner was equally impressed. "What a line!" he exclaimed.

Among those in that line were ends Clarence Swanson and Leo Scherer and Roy "Link" Lyman, whom Omaha World-Herald sports editor Frederick Ware called "as great a tackle as ever played."

Dawson's teams overpowered opponents, as did those of his successor, Ernie Bearg. But the pressure from students and boosters was such that Bearg was forced to resign following the 1928 season, despite a 7-1-1 record and the championship of the newly formed Big Six Conference.

Though the situation was more complicated than one game, a 13-3 loss against Army effectively sealed Bearg's fate. Nebraska traveled to West Point to play the Cadets, who were led by Christian Cagle, with six consecutive victories and a scoreless tie with perennially powerful Pittsburgh.

Notre Dame Coach Knute Rockne called Weir "the best tackle I have ever seen." Rockne estimated that the 6-foot, 191-pound native of Superior, Neb., made 80 percent of the tackles in Nebraska's 34-6 loss against his Fighting Irish and the Four Horsemen at South Bend, Ind., in 1924.

The Cornhuskers would have earned a Rose Bowl bid with a victory.

Nebraska was without quarterback Fay "Reb" Russell, who had left the team because of a dispute with Bearg. Even so, Cornhusker fans were optimistic about the team's chances.

Nebraska led 3-0 at halftime, on a 20-yard, Clair Sloan field goal. Early in the third quarter, Sloan ran 35 yards for a touchdown, with the aid of blocks by McMullen and halfback Edward "Blue" Howell. But the play was called back by an official, who ruled Sloan had stepped out of bounds.

Soon after, Cagle, a 167-pound All-American, ran 37 yards for a touchdown to give Army all the points it needed.

Nebraska's Rose Bowl hopes were deflated. Phizzzzzz . . .

The Cornhuskers returned home to defeat Kansas State 8-0 at Memorial Stadium. But the damage had been done. Bearg's teams weren't imaginative enough, and they couldn't win the big games.

So Bearg departed and was replaced by D.X. Bible.

Nebraska turned to Bible at the suggestion of Rockne, who had been approached about the possibility of leaving Notre Dame to coach the Cornhuskers. He respectfully declined.

Among the assistants on Bible's first staff was Weir, recently retired after playing three seasons for the Frankford Yellowjackets of the fledgling National Football League. ■

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Determined to Play at NU

**'Get taller' comment
didn't phase Huskers'
No. 3 all-time scorer**

An excited Amy Stephens was introduced to Colleen Matsuhara before the Nebraska women's basketball team played Colorado at Boulder in January of 1983.

Matsuhara was in what would be her final season as Nebraska's head coach, and Stephens, a sophomore at Alliance, Neb., High School, was an aspiring Husker basketball player.

Stephens had made the trip with her uncle, a Lincoln sports writer, who introduced the two.

Matsuhara was cordial but unimpressed. "Get taller," she said.

Nothing else, just "get taller." Stephens, now in her sixth year as head women's basketball coach at the University of Nebraska-Kearney, remembers as if it were yesterday.

"I didn't get discouraged by that," she said recently. "I just kept working hard."

She was determined to play basketball at Nebraska and had even announced that intention to her dad the year before, when she was a high school freshman. "I had no clue what it took," she said.

What it took was the hard work and determination of one who never loses sight of a goal set at an early age. And what it produced was a career that ranks among the best in Husker history.

Stephens started all but one game in her four seasons at Nebraska and scored 1,976 points, the third-highest total in school history behind only Karen Jennings and Maurice Ivy.

She and Ivy were teammates for three seasons, and in 1987-88 they led Nebraska to its first conference championship and its first NCAA Tournament appearance.

Stephens ranks among the school career leaders in assists, steals, free throw percentage, field goal percentage and 3-point field goal percentage. She scored 30 or more points eight times, with a high of 40 against Oklahoma in 1989, a total ranks fourth at Nebraska all-time. She finished her career by averaging 21.9 points per game and earning first-team All-Big Eight honors in 1988-89.



Amy Stephens scored 1,976 points in her career at Nebraska.

"I was really pleased with my experience at Nebraska," she said.

Stephens played during a "transition" period in women's basketball at Nebraska, if not women's basketball in general. When she was in elementary school and junior high, the best girls basketball players were usually described as "tomboys," she said. "Then it was, you played like a boy. But by the time I got to Nebraska, you had the respect as an athlete. It was like: 'Hey, that girl can play.'"

She played because "my skills were so much better," she said.

"I didn't have the athleticism that players do now. Now there are phenomenal athletes with great (basketball) skills. So I really felt like I came through at the right time."

There will always be opportunities for players as fundamentally sound as she was, however. She learned the game by playing on organized teams, in junior high and high school, and by playing on AAU teams. She attended summer camps at Nebraska before her junior and senior years in high school.

And she developed her ball-handling skills and shooting touch, which enabled her to hit 40 percent from 3-point range, with hours of often-solitary practice in the family driveway.

She regularly got up at 6 a.m. to shoot baskets before going to school.

By her senior year in high school, Kelly Hill had succeeded Matsuhara as head coach, and the Huskers were aggressively recruiting her, even though "I would have gone there even without a scholarship," Stephens said. "I told my dad I just wanted to be a

25 YEARS

of Women's Athletics

In celebration of 25 years of women's athletics at Nebraska, Huskers Illustrated is featuring stories with Husker women student athletes from the late 1970s and 1980s, remembering the way things were and discussing how things have changed

Husker."

Her second year at Nebraska, Angela Beck replaced Hill as head coach, a hiring that indicated "Nebraska was ready to make a commitment to women's basketball," said Stephens.

The travel budget increased. The team got new "practice gear, three sets," as a result of a new shoe contract, "a lot of material things." The players began lifting in the strength complex during the off-season and eating at the training table (the year after Stephens completed her eligibility).

Beck also set about up-grading the schedule, replacing non-NCAA Division I opponents.

That was a priority when she arrived. No more games against Nebraska-Omaha, a team the Huskers had defeated the previous year 84-60. In Beck's first season, the Huskers lost at UNO 76-74. The next season, they won the Big Eight championship and played in the NCAA Tournament.

Stephens recently recounted that story to a prospective recruit.

She played in Germany for one season, then returned to Nebraska as a graduate assistant under Beck for a season. She also spent a year coaching and teaching at Omaha South High School and two years as an assistant to Theresa Becker at Iowa State before being hired by Nebraska-Kearney.

"I became a head coach at 26. As I look back, I'm not sure I was ready," Stephens said. "But it was the opportunity of a lifetime, a diamond-in-the-rough program." And it has worked out well.

Stephens now recruits players much like herself. "I've already made five or six visits with Nebraska kids, same background, hard-working, determined to be good players," she said.

And she never tells them they need to get taller. ■

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It's A Long Way From Lewiston

Wischmeier makes the big jump to play for Nebraska as a true freshman

By Todd Henrichs

A teenager's life is all about impulse buying, but when it came to choosing a college, Lindsay Wischmeier is thankful she didn't latch on to the first pair of designer jeans on the rack.

Wischmeier, then a senior at tiny Lewiston High School, had scholarship offers on the table from Georgia Tech and nearby Kansas State. Her dream was to play at the University of Nebraska, but it was October, and Cornhusker coaches had yet to express an interest.

Coaches from the other schools were pushing for a decision, sensing the opportunity to tap into Nebraska's market of outstanding high school volleyball players. Wischmeier was mulling over her decision, just as the phone rang.

"Coach (Terry) Pettit called to find out if I had committed anywhere," Wischmeier recalled, still thankful the answer was "No."

"Then they came out and watched me play a couple of games. I've grown up watching Nebraska volleyball for a lot of years, and to have a chance to be out on the court in

Lindsay Wischmeier played in Nebraska's first six matches and started against No. 8 Florida.

that environment is incredible."

Wischmeier quickly snapped up the scholarship offer from Nebraska, where her true-life fairy tale continues this fall. Expected to see little playing time or even redshirt her freshman year, Wischmeier has played in Nebraska's first six matches and even gained her first start against No. 8 Florida.

A 5-foot-9 setter, Wischmeier's job is running NU's complicated 6-2 offense with the same grace as junior Jill McWilliams. She's gaining valuable experience while allowing coaches to slowly bring along freshman Greichaly Cepero.

Cepero started as a hitter last weekend, but at some point, Pettit expects her to take over one of the setter spots while still being available as an attacker in the front row. That would free up as many as seven additional substitutions per game for Nebraska, allowing increased roles for NU's defensive specialists.

Most assume Cepero will take over Wischmeier's setting duties, but even Pettit knows better than to assume anything regarding the last-minute addition to his recruiting class.

"For her to be able to go out in her first match and play a team like Pacific, and the following match a team like Penn State and play well and stay composed, I think says a lot about her," Pettit said.

Wischmeier continues to draw solid reviews from Pettit, who first installed the 6-2 offense three days before NU's season opener. She impressed her coach in the team's Red-White Scrimmage, but even before that, Pettit said he knew he had a player with the character necessary to play at Nebraska.

He recounted seeing Wischmeier be knocked unconscious while playing in the Girls' State Basketball Tournament.

"I was going for a rebound and so were two other girls from the opposing side," Wischmeier recalled. "We kind of collided our heads, and I got knocked unconscious."

"I was out for probably 15 minutes on the floor, but I wanted to play. It was my senior season, and I wasn't sitting out what could be my last game. They let me go in, but they had doctors on every corner of the court watching me the last three minutes of the game."

The doctors — and Pettit — eventually saw Wischmeier sink the winning free throws in a come-from-behind Lewiston victory.

"I knew we'd made a good deci-



Lindsay Wischmeier expected to see little playing time or even redshirt her freshman year, but she quickly moved into Nebraska's rotation.

sion when I saw that," Pettit said. "Then Lindsay's play in the scrimmage told me that mentally she could handle this. I took my cues from her."

Wischmeier played the 6-2 in high school, but such two-setter offenses are rarities at the collegiate level. Nebraska teams haven't operated from the 6-2 since 1984, but Stanford did en route to the 1994 national

championship.

Pettit said the new offense is "10 times" as complicated as the standard 5-1 sets.

Wischmeier is supremely confident, but she admitted to having a few doubts before Nebraska's season-opening tournament. While watching Penn State and Florida tangle before the Huskers were to meet Pacific, her knees began to wobble.

Only a few months separated from high school, she questioned whether she could indeed play at the highest collegiate level this soon and against the very best teams.

"I was doubting myself a little bit," she said.

But when Pettit called her over a rotation before she was to enter the match, Wischmeier was surprised at how calm she was. The opportunity to play as a freshman setter at Nebraska was one few have ever received and one she couldn't let slow her down.

"He just told me to trust myself," said Wischmeier, who helped Lewiston to state titles in 1995 and '97. "Knowing the coaches had confidence in me helped a lot."

"It's quite an opportunity to go from playing at a school my size to playing Penn State and Pacific. I just try not to dwell on that." ■

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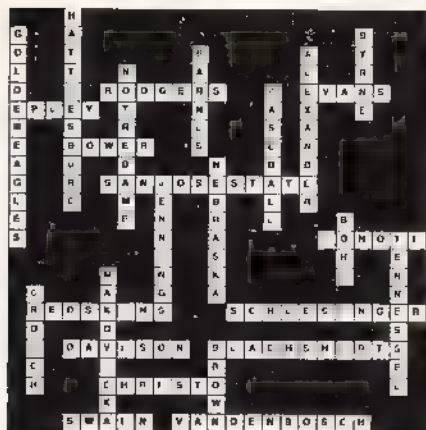
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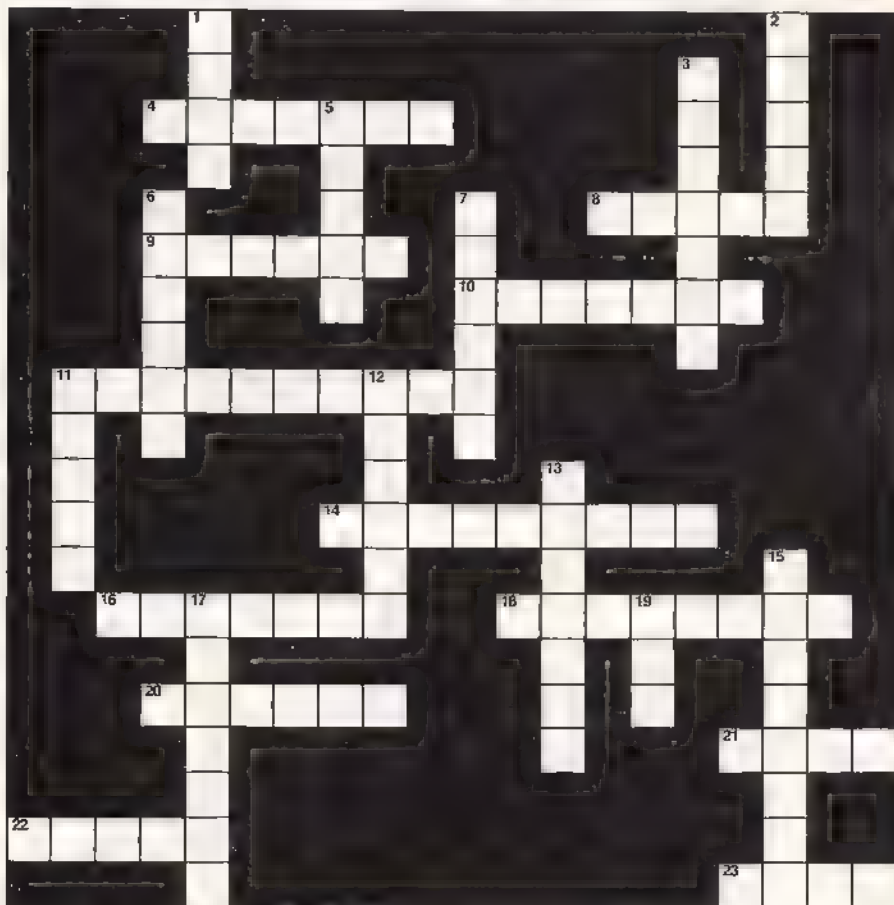
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 18 Missouri nickname
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 21 NU's No. 13
 22 NU athletic director
 23 NU quarterback coach

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- 1 NU linebacker coach
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 5 Previous MU coach
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- 17 Former MU quarterback who played major league baseball
 19 MU coach's former school
 Answers in Oct. 2 issue

This Week in Husker History

September 19

1970 — Nebraska, a two-touchdown underdog, plays No. 3-ranked Southern California to a 21-21 tie at the Los Angeles Coliseum on the way to its first national championship. Joe Orduna's 67-yard touchdown run gives the Huskers a 21-14 lead, but a bad snap on Paul Rogers' field goal attempt allows USC to tie the game with a touchdown midway through the fourth quarter.

September 20

1958 — Nebraska opens the season with a 14-7 upset of Coach Rip Engel's Penn State team before a crowd of 25,000 at Memorial Stadium. The key play is a 92-yard kickoff return for a touchdown by the Huskers' Pat Fischer, a 5-foot-9, 163-pound sophomore.

September 21

1996 — Two-time defending national champion and top-ranked Nebraska

sees a 26-game winning streak end unceremoniously, 19-0 to Arizona State in Tempe, Ariz. The Cornhuskers lose 3-of-6 fumbles and give up three safeties. It is the first time in 51 games that Nebraska has been shut out.

September 22

1962 — Bob Devaney's first game as head coach is a 53-0 victory against South Dakota at Memorial Stadium. The first touchdown of the Devaney era comes on a pass from John Fauman to Larry Tomlinson. Before the game, South Dakota's first-year head coach Bob Burns predicts: "If Nebraska shoots off a cannon after every touchdown, the crowd may go home shell-shocked."

September 23

1972 — Nebraska, still hoping to win an unprecedented third consecutive national championship, overwhelms Army at West Point, 77-7. All 49

Cornhuskers who make the trip play. Johnny Rodgers scores three touchdowns, and Dave Humm completes 14-of-18 passes for 160 yards.

September 24

1994 — Nebraska rolls up 699 yards, including 510 rushing, and blocks three punts in a 70-21 victory against hapless Pacific at Memorial Stadium. Quarterback Tommie Frazier, who takes just nine snaps, is admitted to the hospital the next day because of a blood clot behind his right knee.

September 25

1965 — Frank Solich rushes for a school single-game record 204 yards and three touchdowns in the No. 2-ranked Cornhuskers' 27-17 victory against the Air Force Academy at Colorado Springs. The week before the game, Solich is featured on the cover of Sports Illustrated. Si jinx? Hardly. ■

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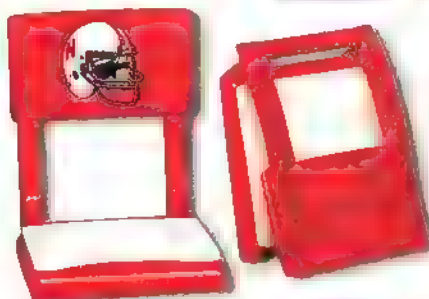
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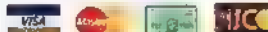
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Cornhuskers Set Trend in Recruiting Linemen

**Quarterbacks
are also a key to
any recruit class**

By James Hale

As college football recruiting continues to evolve in the 1990s, two trends stand out more so than ever before.

First, the early commitment has become a major factor in the success of each college football program. If a program doesn't have at least five commitments heading into its first game, it is considered behind in the college football recruiting world.

Second is the premium status now given to offensive linemen. To have a great class, you must sign outstanding offensive linemen, players who are known from coast-to-coast. This is a relatively new trend, but Nebraska has always been ahead of the game in his area.

Nebraska has been one of college football's great rushing powers since the '70s, and powerful offensive lines have been the main reason why. Prep offensive linemen across the country began to notice that the Huskers offensive linemen not only got to the pros but also received as much publicity as their running backs. Offensive linemen for years have been searching for a way to get notice. At Nebraska, the offensive linemen often are the most publicized position group on the squad.

M.J. Flaum (6-foot-5, 280 pounds



Offensive lineman Martin "M.J." Flaum committed to Nebraska early, picking the Huskers over Colorado.

with 4.95 speed in the 40-yard dash) of Denver (Northglenn) knows all about the Cornhusker offensive line reputation. It's one of the reasons why the preseason All-American committed early to Nebraska.

"At Nebraska, the offensive line seems to be treated with more respect than at some schools," Flaum said. "It's an honor to play in the offensive line, and the fans there pay just as much attention to those guys up front as they do to any other position. That fascinates me really and put things in

a different perspective when it comes to picking a school. Everybody wants to play someplace where what you do is respected."

Flaum is the traditional Nebraska offensive lineman type. He has great size and can get bigger. Flaum already brings a 350-pound bench to the campus, has quick feet for a big man and believes he can get his 40 time under 4.9. Flaum won the state title in the shot put (56-8) and took third in the discus (172-10). Last year, he earned all-conference and all-district honors for the second straight season.

Flaum's decision came down to Nebraska and Colorado, with the Huskers beating out the home team.

"I didn't want to get way too far from home," Flaum said. "Colorado was closer, but Nebraska wasn't too bad. After looking at everything real hard, I just felt that Nebraska was the best overall program. They are more consistent than Colorado. I like what Coach (Gary) Barnett is doing at Colorado, but Nebraska has stability. However, the deciding factor was the Nebraska offensive line and the chance to play on it. That is what really sold Nebraska to me."

Nebraska won his services over Colorado, Colorado State, Notre Dame, Kansas State and Michigan.

Quarterbacks are always a key in any recruiting class. You don't always sign one, and at times, you sign one with the intention of playing him at another position. That happens at times at Nebraska because their quarterback recruits are always great athletes. They have to be to run Nebraska's multiple-option attack.

The quarterbacks Nebraska recruits are usually the best athlete on their high school teams, capable of playing several positions and usually excel on special teams, too.

The Huskers will be looking to at least one and maybe two quarterbacks for this year's class. Scanning the country, there doesn't appear to be an option quarterback that the national recruiting experts are raving about, however, there are plenty of guys that are super athletes and have drawn the

Commitments for 2000

Player	Hometown (high school)	Ht.	Wt.	Pos.
Ira Cooper	Omaha (Westside), Neb.	6-1 1/2	220	LB
Sandro DeAngelis	Buffalo, N.Y. (St. Joseph Coll.)	5-9	195	FB/K
Mike Erickson	Papillion (Papillion-LaVista), Neb.	6-4	260	OL
Martin Flaum	Denver (Northglenn), Colo.	6-5	280	OL
Steve Kriewald	North Loup-Scotia	5-11	250	FB
DeWayne Long Jr.	West Des Moines (Dowling) Iowa	6-1	205	FB
Lornell McPherson	Omaha (Central), Neb.	5-11	175	DB/WB
Ross Pilkington	Loveland, Colo.	6-1	175	WR
Josh Plisch	Rothschild, Wis.	6-4	290	OL
Jason Richenberger	Liberty, Mo.	6-3	210	LB
Chris Septak	Millard (West), Neb.	6-4	235	TE

attention of Nebraska and others.

One such athlete is T.J. Prunty (6-3, 195, 4.55) of St. Paul (Academy Summit), Minn. There doesn't seem to be anything that Prunty can't do on an athletic field. He has earned all-state honors two straight years as a quarterback/free safety. A year ago, he threw for 1,200 yards and ran for more than 1,200 yards out of a West Coast Offense. On defense, he picked off five passes as a free safety/cornerback. His skills earned him Player of the Year honors in his conference.

Prunty may be even better in baseball where the pro scouts are looking at him as a possible first- or second-round draft choice after he hit .626 and went 12-1 on the mound with a 0.80 earned run average. Prunty averaged two strikeouts an inning. Throw in the fact he was also first-team all-state in basketball after he averaged 14 rebounds and 19 points per game, and you have quite an athlete.

"T.J. is one of the best athletes that I have ever seen," said Coach Brian Sandifer. "He has great size, speed and the desire to be great. His ability is unquestioned, and you couple that with the fact he wants to be successful, and you have a can't-miss kid. He reads defenses well, throws well, runs the option, is a great hitter on defense, and he is an excellent cover guy. He would be a great Nebraska style of quarterback."

Early, it appears that Nebraska and Miami are Prunty's top two choices. He has set a visit with the Hurricanes, with Nebraska, Minnesota and Michigan State set to get looks as well.

"I really like Nebraska's tradition and what the program stands for in college football," Prunty said. "I have always watched Nebraska. I had relatives who have lived in Nebraska, and I have always watched them on television. I am trying to keep an open mind about the four schools I am visiting. The only school I have seen thus far is Minnesota on an unofficial visit. I would say that Nebraska and Miami are the two football programs that I like best and the two offenses that I think my skills could fit in best with."

Mitch Meeuwsen (6-3, 195, 4.5) of Forest Grove, Ore., is another athlete who plays on both sides of the ball. At quarterback, Meeuwsen hit on 65 of 161 passes for 865 yards and seven touchdowns. He also rushed for another 353 yards, at 4.1 yards per carry, and scored four touchdowns. On defense, Meeuwsen plays both free safety and cornerback and came up with eight interceptions.

Meeuwsen likes Oregon, Oregon

Sooners Get Wide Receiver

Oklahoma earned its fifth oral commitment toward the 2000 recruiting class when blue-chip wide receiver Atelo Ford (6-foot-1, 180, 4.5) of Ardmore, Okla., committed Sept. 16.

Ford is regarded as one of the top five players in Oklahoma and had more than 15 scholarship offers before selecting the Sooners. Ford turned down Oklahoma State and Nebraska.

Brandon Shelby (5-10, 187, 4.4) of Kansas City (Rockhurst), Mo., has knocked the Cornhuskers out of his top three list. Missouri, Oklahoma and Colorado are among his final selections.

Running back Charles Lee (6-0, 180, 4.45) of talent rich Dallas (Carter), is a jitterbug who feels he can enhance any team's tailback situation. Lee had 150 yards in the Cowboys' season opener and is talking Texas A&M, Texas, Texas Tech, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Oklahoma State.

Quarterback Dustin Long (6-3, 180) of Port Neches-Groves, Texas, is narrowing his recruiting list. Long is considered the best pure passer in Texas and says that Texas A&M, Oklahoma State, Houston and Tulane are his top four choices.

Wide Receiver Tommy Cook of Victoria, Texas, committed to Kentucky over Baylor, Texas Tech and Tulane.

While Nebraska leads the conference with 11 commitments, and Texas is right behind with 10, you have several schools struggling with early commitments. Texas Tech has none at this point, Kansas State has only one, Iowa State one, Baylor one and Kansas two.

Quarterback/athlete Dominique Sims of Minneapolis now lists his top five as Minnesota, Colorado, Northwestern, Nebraska and Illinois.

One of the best defensive tackle prospects in the country is Dwight Whitfield (6-3, 275, 4.8) of St. Louis (Vashon). A preseason All-American, Whitfield can name his colleges. A year ago, he earned the nickname Sackman with 29 sacks. He has six through two games and believes he will get over the 30 mark. He has already set visits to Indiana and Oklahoma. Michigan State, Wisconsin and Missouri are also possibilities.

All-America running back Chris Howard (5-11, 180, 4.5) of Wilmington (Banning), Calif., is picking up where he left off last year. Howard rushed for more than 2,600 yards a year ago and started this season with 241 yards and five touchdowns in the opener. Howard grew up a USC fan, and most figure he will be a Trojan, however he wants to check out other schools that run the football. Howard plans to visit Tennessee, Texas A&M, Oklahoma, Nebraska and UCLA.

Rashon Myles (6-2, 205, 4.4) of Dallas (Christian) is another top back who is off to a great start. Myles has already rushed for 249 yards and four touchdowns in two games. He is still considering Nebraska along with Purdue, Missouri, Arizona State, Texas A&M and Oklahoma. ■

State, Washington, Notre Dame and Nebraska as his top five schools

"I love the tradition at Nebraska and the fact they are a powerhouse program," Meeuwsen said. "I like the offense they run at Nebraska a lot and the way they run their program."

Reggie Nevels (6-1, 170, 4.45) of Marion, Ind., is being recruited as both a quarterback and cornerback. Northwestern, UCLA, Michigan State, Purdue, Cincinnati and Nebraska are his top five choices.

Craig Candeto (5-11, 190, 4.5) of Deland, Fla., is a pure option quarterback who threw for more than 1,000 yards and ran for 900. He will either be a wide receiver or quarterback in

college and is looking at Florida, Clemson, Georgia Tech, Alabama and Nebraska. Candeto is leaning toward staying in the Southeast.

Chris Mickelson (6-3, 175, 4.7) of Gregory, S.D., is an option quarterback who has rushed for more than 1,000 yards and thrown for more than 1,000 yards. Mickelson camped at Nebraska and says if Nebraska offers, he will be a Cornhusker.

"I really like Nebraska and think I have an excellent chance to go there," Mickelson said. "Their offense is perfect for me, and they have one of the best programs in the country. I am looking forward to the opportunity to go there." ■

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Narrow Escape Similar To '97 Game?

*Crouch offers apology of sorts
for offense's lackluster performance*



**Mike
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IT'S ALWAYS DARKEST before the dawn. That cliché might apply here.

Eric Crouch seemed to think so, anyway, though not exactly in those words.

Nebraska's sophomore quarterback compared the Cornhuskers' 20-13 victory against Southern Mississippi to their 38-24 victory against Central Florida in 1997.

He was a redshirt then, watching from the stands. "It was a close game," he said. "You kind of need one of those games during the year to really set the stage for the rest of the season."

Central Florida led 17-14 at halftime, much to the chagrin of Nebraska fans, a handful of whom directed their frustrations at Cornhusker quarterback Scott Frost. It was an ugly scene, and hardly something you would expect to find during a run to a national championship.

There were other narrow escapes in 1997, but none that upsetting.

So maybe Crouch's comparison works.

The difference is, despite the complaints about Frost, Nebraska's offense eventually got untracked that afternoon, picking up 514 yards and 30 first downs and generally controlling the ball.

Against Southern Mississippi, the Cornhusker offense never did any of those things.

It was so ineffective, in fact, that Crouch felt compelled to offer an apology of sorts to a few Blackshirts afterward. "I told them: 'Next week, we're going to try to make it a little bit easier for you, make a few drives early in the game and establish our offense early,'" he said.

Early. Late. It would have been welcome at any time against Southern Mississippi. But it never came around. "We really had a lot of times where we were just this close to going out there and making something happen," said I-back Dan Alexander, Nebraska's leading rusher with 54 yards.

"It was frustrating. We're tired of having those games where we're not quite living up to our expectations. I think as an offense, we're ready to press on, to move on now."

"Things have kind of settled down. I think we're really going to start clicking."

The offense hasn't clicked since the Iowa game, when it produced 543 yards, including 347 rushing. Since then, the Cornhuskers have managed only 486 yards total, in two games.

And, more to the point, they've rushed for only 233 of those yards, prompting Coach Frank Solich to admit: "I'm concerned that for two weeks in a row we've not been able to run the ball."

"We have shown signs, at times, of being able to get it done on the offensive side of it," he said. "We've just not been consistent enough. So we'll start from ground zero in

terms of working on the offensive end of it as far as execution is concerned. And we'll just start building again."

There's a greater sense of urgency now, with the Big 12 season at-hand. Ideally, the problems would have been identified and corrected during the non-conference schedule.

Despite the obvious offensive shortcomings, however, there doesn't seem to be panic among the players. "I know our offense is going to come around," said rush end Kyle Vanden Bosch.

"We as a defense go up against the offense live a couple of times a week, on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, and they get some touchdowns on us. I know this is a high-powered offense."

"They're going to come around."

Even if they don't right away, the defense seems good enough to provide them a little more time to develop. But eventually the offense is going to have to step up.

"I said last week the character of this defense is as good as I've had here," defensive coordinator Charlie McBride said. "They're self-motivated. You don't have to push them very much."

The defense has intercepted seven passes and recovered five fumbles in three games. And it has allowed only two touchdowns — with the third coming on a blocked punt.

"As far as being proud of them, I can't say enough more," said McBride.

"Because it's not the coach. It's the guys on the field. And I told the kids: 'I believe in you. I can line up guys up in anything and I think you could win.' That's just the way I feel about it."

Because of the play of the defense, Nebraska is 3-0 and can still talk about a run at the national championship, something to which Crouch referred after Saturday's game.

"We had too many mental mistakes today, definitely," he said, adding: "Those are the things that have to be eliminated if we're going to be a national championship team."

McBride, like everyone else, is confident they will be eliminated.

"I think the biggest thing is, when things go bad, this team, it doesn't seem to faze them," he said. "They just seem to come back with more stuff. I was telling a couple of the kids: 'Offensively, you watch next week. They've (offensive players) got pride now. And they had a tough day.'"

"We've been there (defensively). I've been on the other end of that thing, and gone off the field in the same way, disappointed. Not discouraged, but disappointed."

He might have been a little disappointed after the Central Florida game in 1997.

But he wasn't discouraged. And the season turned around, according to Crouch. ■



**Eric Crouch says the
offense made too many
mental mistakes.**

Mike Babcock is a former sports columnist for the Lincoln Journal Star. He has covered Nebraska football for more than 20 years. Mike can be reached at mdb@inetnebr.com or P.O. Box 6782, Lincoln, NE 68506.

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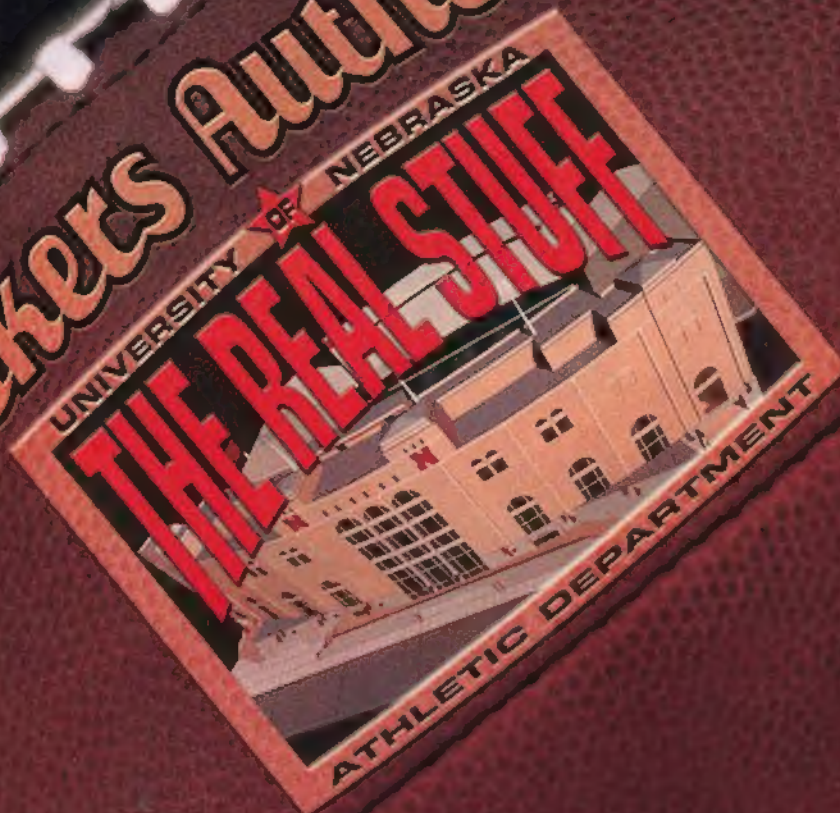


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